



ZENOBIA



Shooting Star of Palmyra

NATHANAEL J. ANDRADE

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Zenobia
Shooting Star of Palmyra
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SHOOTING STAR OF PALMYRA

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*This book is dedicated to all Syrians who hope for peace, justice,
and a home, wherever they may be.*

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Preface

This book is intended for both academic and general readers. This fact has governed key decisions in rendering foreign words, transliterations, and personal names. My goal is to meet all the standards of academic rigor. But even so, I have prioritized the general reader by omitting unfamiliar and taxing linguistic details. I often provide translations of key passages but not texts in their original languages (though see Appendix 3). Similarly, when I reproduce Greek or Palmyrenean words, I provide transliterations in Latin letters. For Greek terms, I do not mark long vowels unless they end a word. When transcribing Palmyrenean, I only reproduce letters that appear in an actual text, not sounds. For Palmyrene personal names, I select a form commonly used in modern scholarship, and I omit most diacritical marks for consonants and vowels (thus we have Hairan, not Ḥaīran). Through these various measures, I hope not to occlude the vision of general readers as they fix their gaze on Zenobia.

For Greek and Latin works, I generally consulted texts from the OCT, Teubner, Collection Budé, GCS, SC, or MGH series, or an otherwise vaunted standard edition. For frequently cited works, further information is in the Abbreviations (by ancient author or title abbreviation) or the Bibliography (by editor). When necessary, I provide publication information in my references. Unless otherwise indicated, translations are mine, though I often checked against other translations for accuracy.

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No author is an island. All historians bring to their narratives the priceless pearls that others have gifted them. I have benefited from the generosity of many people. Their pearls (not Zenobia's teeth!) can be found throughout the book.

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Many speakers at the symposium *Palmyra: Mirage in the Desert*, hosted by Joan Aruz and the Metropolitan Museum on May 23, 2016, enriched my thinking with their lectures and personal conversation. The article versions of their lectures are now in Aruz (2018), but this text was published too late for me to consult it. I cite the oral lectures that the speakers delivered (and oftentimes their many prior publications) as appropriate.

I also want to thank Frederick Luebke and the community at the Cascade Manor Retirement Community in Eugene, Oregon. They

invited me to lecture on Palmyra just as I initiated my research, and they asked many insightful questions that I strained to answer. I hope that the book makes good on some of them.

Like so many students of Palmyra, I live in the shadow of Khaled al-As'ad. May he always be remembered for the scholar that he was.

Abbreviations

AAAS	<i>Annales archéologiques arabes syriennes</i>
AAE	<i>Arabian Archaeology and Epigraphy</i>
AE	<i>L'Année épigraphique</i>
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJP	<i>American Journal of Philology</i>
ANRW	<i>Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt</i>
ARM	<i>Archives royales de Mari</i> . Ed. André Parrot and Georges Dossin (1950–)
BASOR	<i>Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research</i>
BEO	<i>Bulletin d'études orientales</i>
BMC	<i>Catalogue of Greek Coins in the British Museum</i>
BNJ	Ian Worthington, <i>Brill's New Jacoby</i> (Leiden: Brill, 2006–)
CCSL	<i>Corpus Christianorum Series Latina</i>
CIS	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (1880–)
CMC	<i>Der Kölner Mani-Kodex: über das Werden seines Leibes</i> . Ed. Ludwig Koenen and Cornelia Römer (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988)
CQ	<i>Classical Quarterly</i>
CW	<i>Classical World</i>
CRAI	<i>Comptes rendus des séances: Académie des inscriptions & belles-lettres</i>
Festus	J. W. Eadie, <i>Breviarium of Festus: a Critical Edition with Historical Commentary</i> (London: Athlone, 1967)
FHG 4	<i>Fragmenta historicorum Graecorum</i> , vol. 4. Ed. Karl Müller (Paris: Firmin-Didot, 1885)
GRBS	<i>Greek, Roman, and Byzantine Studies</i>
HA	J.-P. Callu et al., <i>Histoire Auguste</i> (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1992). See also Paschoud (2002, 2011); Ratti (2002)
ICS	<i>Illinois Classical Studies</i>
IDelos	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> (1926–)

<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie</i> (1929–)
<i>IGLS 17.1</i> (see above)	<i>Palmyre</i> . Ed. J.-B. Yon (Beirut: IFPO, 2012)
<i>IGR</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae ad romanas pertinentes</i> . Ed. R. Cagnat et al., vols. 1 and 3–4 (Paris: Leroux, 1901–1927)
<i>IJO, Syr.</i>	David Noy and Hanswulf Bloedhorn, <i>Inscriptiones judaicae orientis</i> , vol. 3: Syria and Cyprus (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004)
<i>Inv.</i>	<i>Inventaire des inscriptions de Palmyre</i> . Ed. Jean Cantineau et al., 12 vols. (1930–)
<i>JAOS</i>	<i>Journal of the American School of Oriental Studies</i>
<i>JHS</i>	<i>Journal of Hellenic Studies</i>
<i>JJS</i>	<i>Journal of Jewish Studies</i>
<i>JNES</i>	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
<i>JRS</i>	<i>Journal of Roman Studies</i>
<i>JSJ</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Period</i>
<i>MUSJ</i>	<i>Mélanges de l'Université Saint-Joseph</i>
<i>OGIS</i>	<i>Orientis graeci inscriptiones selectae</i> . Ed. Wilhelm Dittenberger, 2 vols. (Hildesheim, Germany: Olms, 1903–1905)
<i>O. Mich.</i>	Youtie and Winter (1951)
<i>OLP</i>	<i>Orientalia Lovaniensia Periodica</i>
<i>P. Dura</i>	<i>The Excavations at Dura-Europos, Final Report</i> , vol. 5.1: <i>The Parchments and Papyri</i> . Ed. C. Bradford Welles (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1959)
<i>P. Oxy.</i>	<i>The Oxyrhynchus Papyri</i> (1898–)
<i>P. Yadin</i>	<i>The Documents from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters</i> , vol. 1: <i>Greek Papyri</i> . Ed. Naphtali Lewis (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989)
<i>PAES</i>	<i>Princeton University Archaeological Expeditions to Syria</i>
<i>PAT</i>	<i>Palmyrene Aramaic Texts</i> . Ed. Delbert Hillers and Eleonora Cussini (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996)
<i>PG</i>	<i>Patrologia Graeca</i>
<i>PME</i>	Lionel Casson, <i>The Periplus maris Erythraei: Text with Introduction, Translation, and Commentary</i> (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009)
<i>PTL</i>	<i>Palmyrene Tax Law</i> . See Matthews (1984) 173–80; Healey (2009) 164–205
<i>REA</i>	<i>Revue des études anciennes</i>
<i>RIC</i>	<i>The Roman Imperial Coinage</i> . 10 vols. in 12 pts. (London: Spink, 1923–1984)
<i>RRE</i>	<i>Religion in the Roman Empire</i>
<i>RSP</i>	See Gawlikowski (1974)

<i>RTP</i>	Harald Ingholt, <i>Recueil des tessères de Palmyre</i> (Paris: Impr. Nationale, 1955)
<i>SB</i>	<i>Sammelbuch griechischer Urkunden aus Ägypten</i> (1915–)
<i>SEL</i>	<i>Studi epigrafici e linguistici sul Vicino Oriente Antico</i>
<i>SFP</i>	See Sadurska and Bounni (1994)
<i>SP</i>	<i>Studia Palmyreńskie</i>
Syncellus	Alden Mosshammer, <i>Georgii Syncelli Ecloga chronographica</i> (Leipzig: Teubner, 1984)
<i>TEAD</i>	<i>The Excavations at Dura Europos, Preliminary Reports</i> (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1929–1952)
<i>TSO</i>	<i>Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle</i> , in Potter (1990)
<i>XHev/SE</i>	Hannah Cotton and Ada Yardeni, <i>Aramaic, Hebrew, and Greek Documentary Texts from Naḥal Hever and Other Sites</i> (Oxford: Clarendon, 1997)
Zonaras	M. Pinder, <i>Ioannis Zonarae Annales</i> , vol. 2 (Bonn: Weber, 1844)
<i>ZOrA</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Orient-Archäologie</i>
Zos.	Zosimus. See Paschoud (2003)
<i>ZPE</i>	<i>Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik</i>

ZENOBIA

Zenobia's Likenesses

In 268 CE, a star rose from the ancient city of Palmyra. It fast lit the sky of Roman Syria. The shooting star was a woman. In Greek her name was Septimia Zenobia, but her compatriots usually called her Bathzabbai in their native Aramaic tongue. Zenobia was truly remarkable. She even became a Roman empress, an *Augusta*. But like all shooting stars, her luminous trek through the sky was brief. She came to earth in 272, soon disappearing from our view.

While ruler, Zenobia governed a huge tract of the eastern Roman Empire. Her sway encompassed Syria, Arabia, Egypt, and parts of Anatolia. She even waged civil war with the emperors Claudius II, also known as Gothicus (268–270), and Aurelian (270–275). Her exploits are famous. But darkness abounds. Her life before and after her reign is obscure. Her sources often cast shadows instead of shedding light. Even the famous parts of her career are controversial. So meteoric was her rise and fall, and so occlusive are the memories about her.

Writing a book about Zenobia is no easy task. Her fame far exceeds the ancient references to her. So first we will touch upon her sources. Once we comprehend their darkness, then we can begin to glimpse her light.

Textual Sources for Zenobia

Let's begin with the darkness. During the 4th century CE, a fictional conversation between Aurelian and Zenobia circulated. As the story went:

When Aurelian captured her and had her escorted into his presence, he addressed her with these words: "Well, Zenobia?

You dared to behave insolently toward Roman emperors (*imperatores*)?” She reportedly said: “I acknowledge you, who conquers, to be an emperor (*imperator*). I did not deem Gallienus, Aureolus, and the rest to be emperors (*principes*).”¹

This anecdote captures the imagination. A humbled queen defies the Roman emperors and usurpers who had not conquered her. She only admires the man who won. The *Historia Augusta* is the sole surviving witness for this story.

But the story is misleading. Zenobia never openly opposed Gallienus, or the usurper Aureolus. It is silent on Claudius Gothicus. Zenobia resisted this emperor, with success. To make matters worse, the story misrepresents Zenobia’s motivations. As we will discover, Zenobia’s break with the Roman imperial court was complicated. Insolence alone does not explain it. Altogether, the *Historia Augusta*’s tale abounds with infelicities, biases, and errors.²

Therein lies a serious problem. The *Historia Augusta*, famed for its unreliability, is our most detailed source for Zenobia.³ Containing the biographies (“lives”) of Roman emperors and usurpers from the 2nd–3rd centuries, it offers a brief spotlight on Zenobia and her husband, Odainath. These figures also appear in its lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. But the *Historia Augusta* frustrates historians. It ascribes its various lives to different writers. But most now believe that a single author composed it (c. 395). This author, under one writer’s name, sometimes cross-references his material with what he wrote in a life attributed to another.⁴

Such features of the *Historia Augusta* point to a mercurial temperament for its writer. But they raise questions about the work’s historical value. And it gets worse. Some of its sources were good, especially for the earlier biographies. For Zenobia’s life, the author consulted Dexippus and other authors of the 3rd and 4th centuries.⁵ But these sources were not consistently reliable. The *Historia Augusta* is even more treacherous. Its

¹ HA TT 30.23. See Southern (2008) 10–11.

² Southern (2008) 10–12.

³ Hartmann (2001) 17–39; Greek and Latin sources.

⁴ Thomson (2012), esp. 20–22; Stoneman (1992) 9.

⁵ Barnes (1978, 1995); Paschoud (1991); Bleckmann (1995); Potter (1990) 356–63, (2014) 229–30. For Dexippus, *BNJ* 100; Mecella (2013); Potter (1990) 72–94, (2014) 265; Martin and Grusková (2014); Mallan and Davenport (2015).

author enjoyed scurrilous gossip, rumor-mongering, and character assassination. Sometimes including counterfeit material, the work can be wildly inconsistent. Its life of Zenobia depicts a noble and just ruler. But its life of Aurelian portrays her as self-absorbed and despotic. Fabricated letters attributed to Aurelian and Zenobia develop this theme.⁶ The author's validation of Aurelian explains the split in Zenobia's character. By having a courageous, capable, and defiant Zenobia recognize only Aurelian as an emperor, the life of Zenobia highlights his success and the impotence of Gallienus. By depicting her as a self-indulgent despot, the life of Aurelian justifies his war against her. We will learn how these conflicting portrayals sometimes reflect imperial court propaganda. But they obscure Zenobia herself.⁷

Slivers of information come from later Roman and Byzantine sources. Some are fragmentary histories. No longer intact, they were cited in bits by later authors. Others are chronicles, histories that record events in annual order. Sparing in detail, such sources raise many issues. It is often hard to place their treatment of Zenobia and her husband Odainath in context. The fragments attributed to Peter the Patrician and an anonymous figure called *Continuator Dionis* have often been treated as distinct. But their author may have been one person after all.⁸ Where the later histories get information also poses problems. They use earlier sources, even some contemporary to Zenobia. But scholars interpret their precise sources in different ways. Their reliability also varies. So the accounts of authors like Syncellus (c. 800) and Zonaras (12th century) are inconsistent in quality and accuracy.⁹

The history of Zosimus (c. 500) contributes more details than most. He had access to earlier sources, like Dexippus and Eunapius. But Zosimus is centuries removed from Zenobia and is prone to mistakes.¹⁰ Beyond the later Roman and Byzantine sources, Zenobia appears in later Arab and Jewish tales. But these, too, are layered with legends and later

⁶ Paschoud (2011) 182–84; Southern (2008) 10–12 inform the present discussion. For fabrication, see Chastagnol (1994) cxviii–cxxi.

⁷ Casteen (2015), on Johanna I of Naples, governs my perspective on Zenobia's sources.

⁸ Banchich (2015), esp. 3–9 (same); Treadgold (2007) 49, nn. 4–5, 267–68, n. 126 (separate). If separate, one author probably consulted the other: Potter (1990) 395–97.

⁹ Potter (1990) 356–69; Bleckmann (1992); Brecht (1999); Mariev (2008); Treadgold (2013) 51–62, 388–99; Banchich and Lane (2009), esp. 8–11.

¹⁰ On Zosimus's sources, see Potter (1990) 362–63, (2014) 229; Paschoud (2003) xxxvi–xlvi; Treadgold (2007) 107–14.

traditions. Their portrait of Zenobia is far removed from the woman who lived.

The ancients sometimes compared writing about a person's life to sculpting or painting a likeness. Such writing was intended to create a portrait.¹¹ This is our present task. But the ancient sources do not easily yield material for it. The likeness of Zenobia from the *Historia Augusta* is especially deceptive. But we do not rely on texts alone. Visual sources also have a part to play. So they merit reflection.

Visual Sources for Zenobia

If written likenesses of Zenobia pose problems, the visual portraits can also occlude. Palmyra abounds with statues and portraits, but none for Zenobia survives with any certainty.¹² Although the Palmyrenes raised a statue of her on their Great Colonnade, only its inscription has been found.¹³ This statue probably did not depict Zenobia with precision. Even if they could look realistic, public statues often gave people idealized features that conveyed certain virtues, like modesty (for women).

So did funerary likenesses placed in tombs (Figs. 5.1–5.4). At Palmyra, these images commemorated the dead or their relatives, who could still be living. Each likeness represented a specific person. In this sense, funerary images were “portraits.”¹⁴ But they did not capture exact traits, even if they could resemble an individual.¹⁵ Instead, they communicated the status and virtues of people through established styles and features. But these were selected and interwoven in dazzling arrays among individual likenesses. So portraits with different features sometimes represented the same woman.¹⁶ Or a portrait intended for

¹¹ Plut., *Alex.* 1.1–3, *Cim.* 2.3, *Per.* 1.3–4; Lucian, *Alex.*, esp. 3, *Peregr.*, esp. 5–7. Hägg (2012) 4–5, 268–76; Andrade and Rush (2016) 172–74.

¹² Balty (2005) 338 discusses possibilities.

¹³ *IGLS* 17.1.57.

¹⁴ Heyn (2010); Raja (2015a); Long (2016) esp. 143; Albertson (2016); Krag (2016). Also n. 16 below.

¹⁵ Saito and Nakahashi (2016): facial reconstructions of Palmyrene skulls.

¹⁶ Raja (2015a) 352, Fig. 17, 24; Kropp and Raja (2014) 404, Fig. 4; Heyn (2010) 640; Colledge (1976) 62, n. 185; Eleonora Cussini, “Out of a Palmyrene Family,” Metropolitan Museum, NY, May 23, 2016, now in Aruz (2018). For example, the portraits for Ala b. Yarhai; Tadmor, wife of Moqim; Aliat b. Zabdibol; and Hadira, wife of Maliku. *PAT* 0005 (=Sabeh (1953) Pl. 1.2); 0614 (=CIS 2.3.4258, Pl. 39); 0615–16 (=CIS 2.3.4259–60, Pl. 39); 0732–33 (=CIS 2.3.4374-bis, Pl. 42, Ploug (1995) no. 3); 0772 (=CIS 2.3.4412, Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) no. 209); Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) nos. 175, 180. For men, Albertson (2016) 158–59.



FIGURE 1.1 Antoninianus with likeness of Zenobia, Antioch, 272 (British Museum 1974.1001.3; image © The Trustees of the British Museum)

one woman could be used for another.¹⁷ Families and artisans oversaw portraits that maintained a consistent spectrum of styles and attributes over time.¹⁸ So statues and portraits tell us much about social practice and gender at Palmyra. But they do not necessarily communicate the specific attributes of individual women.

Coins pose similar problems. The only surviving images of Zenobia from antiquity are found on coins. Zenobia had these minted in 272 at Antioch and Alexandria. On their obverses, we encounter Zenobia's profile (Figs. 1.1–1.3). A stephane, or crown, adorns her head. On the Antiochene coins, Latin texts describe Zenobia as S(eptimia) Zenobia Aug(usta). On the Alexandrian coins, these concepts are rendered in Greek.¹⁹ Zenobia's regal profile emulates those of other Roman empresses. Some were Severan women like Iulia Domna, Iulia Soaemias, and Iulia Maesa. These were from Palmyra's neighbor Emesa. Others were women related to the many emperors who ruled and died in Zenobia's lifetime.²⁰ Salonina (Gallienus's wife) is most notable among them.

The coins reveal how Zenobia wanted her subjects outside Palmyra to perceive her. They also point to what Zenobia sometimes may have worn as empress. But they hint little at her facial features and physical appearance. Some "realistic" coins from Alexandria suggest an aquiline

¹⁷ Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg-Hansen (1998) no. 81 (=PAT 0753), with Chabot (1922) 120, no. 29, Fig. 30.4. Perhaps CIS 2.3.4373, Pl. 55 (=PAT 0731, Parlasca (1990) 143, no. 16). For men, Albertson (2016) 159.

¹⁸ Albertson (2016).

¹⁹ For coins minted by Zenobia, see Bland (2011); Estiot (2004) 113–20, 222–23.

²⁰ RIC 4–5; Equini Schneider (1993) 94–96.



FIGURE 1.2 Tetradrachm with likeness of Zenobia, Alexandria, 272 (British Museum 1860.032.273; image © The Trustees of the British Museum)



FIGURE 1.3 Tetradrachm with likeness of Zenobia, Alexandria, 272 (Bibliothèque nationale de France, Cabinet de Monnaies, Médailles, et Antiques, no. 3647; image courtesy of the Bibliothèque nationale de France)

nose and somewhat large ears (Fig. 1.3). But they hardly communicate Zenobia's individual charisma.²¹

In its portrait, the *Historia Augusta* describes Zenobia's physical features:

She had a brownish complexion, a dark color, with black eyes that were unusually lively. She had a god-like spirit and an exceptional charm. Her teeth were so white that many thought that they were pearls, not teeth. Her voice was imposing and manly.²²

Zenobia cuts an impressive figure here. But we do not know where the *Historia Augusta* gets its information. Like her coins, the *Historia Augusta* may be obscuring more than it illuminates. Palmyrenes usually had discolored teeth from the excessive fluoride and chloride in their water. In truth, Zenobia probably did too.²³

Such are the immense limits that the sources impose. But we still can learn much about Zenobia. By pondering what life was like for elite women at Palmyra, we can understand aspects of Zenobia that texts and coins do not describe. This approach may not compensate for the shadows that the sources cast upon Zenobia's personality, aspirations, and dreams. It cannot expose her interiority. But it can illuminate the material and social world that she experienced. Her world was the city of Palmyra. Let's contemplate it and its sources.

Sources for Palmyra

Sometime between 268 and 270, a stone-cutter carved letters into a milestone in Palmyra's hinterland. Its Greek has been effaced. But its Palmyrenean is mostly intact. Honoring the ruler of the Roman East, it reads:

Greek:

. . . [for] the safety
of Septimia Zenobia, most
illustrious queen (*basilissēs*), mother
of the king (*metros tou basileōs*) . . .

²¹ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 75–76; Equini Schneider (1993) 95–96. *BNF* 3646–47: <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b8485689n.r=zenobie?rk=150215;2> <http://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b84856909.r=zenobie?rk=21459;2>.

²² *HA* TT 30.15–16.

²³ Yoshimura et al. (2016), who nonetheless accept the *Historia Augusta*'s testimony.

Palmyrenean:

For the life and victory of Septimius
Wahballath Athenodoros, illustrious king
of kings (*mlk mlk'*) and *epanorthotēs*
of all the East (*'pnrtt' dy mđnh' klh*),
son of Septimius Odainath, king of kings,
and for the life of Septimia Bathzabbai,
illustrious queen (*mlkt'*), mother of the king of kings
(*'mh dy mlk mlk'*), daughter of Antiochus
(*bt 'ntywkws*), mile 14.²⁴

The inscription testifies to Zenobia's political maneuvering early in her reign. She had not yet claimed the title of *imperator* for her son Wahballath, let alone Augustus.²⁵ She had chosen titles carefully. She hoped to reconcile with the Roman imperial court. The Greek *basileus/basilissa* and the Palmyrenean *mlk/mlkt'* were decidedly ambiguous. While used for Roman emperors and empresses, their more generic meanings were king and queen. In fact, Wahballath's title "king of kings" expressed his superiority to the Persian monarch who claimed it.²⁶ Wahballath's titles reflect how Zenobia had claimed for him the stature of his father Odainath. But the Roman court would not tolerate even that. We will return to these titles, with discussion of the civil war that they helped trigger.

The inscription imparts vital information about Zenobia, however little. Her name was Bathzabbai in Palmyrenean. She bore her husband's gentile Septimia. Her father's name was Antiochus. A mother, she had survived the joys, pains, and dangers of pregnancy and childbirth. Her son had survived infancy. His name was Wahballath, "gift of Allat" in Arabic. Allat was an Arabian goddess widely worshipped by Palmyrenes, and Arabic names like Wahballath were very common at Palmyra.²⁷ Zenobia knew what the name meant. The inscription includes its Greek translation: Athenodoros (gift of Athena). Only a few such surviving inscriptions mention Zenobia. Without them, we would know nothing explicit about her at all.

²⁴ PAT 0317; **Appendix 3**, 4c. For date, Hartmann (2001) 242.

²⁵ Hartmann (2001) 242–45; Southern (2000) 83–86.

²⁶ Hartmann (2001) 176–85, 451–52; Southern (2008) 71–74.

²⁷ See pp. 27, n. 47 and 86, n. 191; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 85.

But even so, we still can learn much about Zenobia. The Palmyrenes made thousands of inscriptions on stone and bronze in antiquity. They shed light on many features of life at Palmyra. Some inscriptions adorned public spaces. They could celebrate a Palmyrene's contributions to a temple or monument, or they could accompany public statues. Many were in tombs. Of these, a great number commemorated loved ones, both dead and still living. These inscriptions could appear on tombstones, funerary portraits, or sarcophagi. Some inscriptions identified the builders and owners of a tomb. Others documented transactions for spaces within them. Inscribed dedications to gods, often on altars, illuminate how Palmyrenes interacted with their divinities. The names and words on modest clay tokens (*tesserae*) shed light on ritual banqueting. The so-called Palmyrene Tax Law is an immensely famous inscription. It tells us much about economic and commercial life in the city and its hinterland. Altogether, inscriptions saturated Palmyra's landscape in antiquity. So they were a palpable part of Zenobia's sensory world.

Most inscriptions from Palmyra are written in Palmyrenean,²⁸ one of many Aramaic dialects spoken in Roman Syria. Many inscriptions, especially those decorating public spaces, are also in Greek or bilingual.²⁹ Latin inscriptions also appear, sometimes with Palmyrenean counterparts.³⁰ A few inscriptions are even trilingual. Most Palmyrenean inscriptions are written in a monumental "square" script. Its letters bear graphic affinities to those of other Aramaic dialects. Some are written in a cursive script resembling Syriac Estrangelo.

Archaeological work has also produced vital sources for Palmyrenean life. The last century witnessed excavations at Palmyra's urban center, temples, and primary monuments.³¹ It has seen the exploration or excavation of the tombs of Palmyra's necropoleis.³² Recent

²⁸ PAT; Yon (2013); al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012). Cantineau (1935): grammar; Gzella (2015) 248–55: cultural history of Palmyrenean. **Appendix 2.**

²⁹ See *IGLS* 17.1.

³⁰ al-As'ad and Delplace (2001); Hutton and Bonesho (2015).

³¹ Delplace (2017) now offers a history of Palmyra's material culture. For explorations, excavations, and their history, see Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 25–27; Degeorge (2001) 282–83; al-As'ad, al-As'ad, and Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 299–318; Schmidt-Colinet (2005); Finlayson (1998) 1.78–114; Sommer (2017) 11–13. Some key reports of the 20th century: Wiegand (1932); Seyrig, Amy, and Will (1968–1975); Collart et al. (1969–2000); Michalowski (1960–1966); Bounni (1992–2004); Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy (2005).

³² Watzinger and Wulzinger (1932), Watzinger (1932) 77–84. Gawlikowski (1970), Saito (2005a) 151–53; de Jong (2017), esp. 286–301 for tomb studies and research. Tombs: Abdul-Hak (1952);

excavations, systematic surveys, and satellite imaging have informed us about Palmyra's Hellenistic remains, northwest and southwest hinterland, houses, fortifications, and topography.³³ Work on Palmyra's material culture has also gone digital. Because of the *Palmyra Portrait Project*, thousands of portraits from Palmyra's tombs are now being organized into a remarkable online collection.³⁴ Inscriptions are also being compiled digitally.³⁵ A valuable blog has been devoted to Zenobia herself.³⁶ Such ventures will place more knowledge at our fingertips than ever before. Through the labors of archaeologists, we have robust knowledge of Palmyra's civic spaces, temples, tombs, funerary world, domestic life, irrigation, resources, commercial routes, and rural landscapes. We know much about Palmyrene life from such remarkable work.

We have already encountered Palmyra's funerary portraits. They are numerous and sometimes inscribed. Many portraits are reliefs that depict upper torsos and heads (Figs. 5.1, 5.3–5.4). These portraits covered the burial niches (*loculi*) of tombs or nearby walls and galleries. Other portraits are reliefs from sarcophagi that portray banqueting scenes on their lids (Figs. 4.4, 5.2). These often display a deceased man with his household. Such images are vital sources for life at Palmyra, and they are valuable for many reasons. They tell us about Palmyrene social relations, genealogies, and marital patterns. They reveal how the relatives of the dead chose for them to be remembered. They disclose much about gestures, clothing, and jewelry. They communicate attitudes and values.

Bounni and Saliby (1957), Bounni (1961–1962); variously in Michalowki (1960–1966); al-As'ad and Taha (1965), (1968); Sadurska (1979); Higuchi and Izumi (1994); Schmidt-Colinet (1992); Saliby (1992); Higuchi and Saito (2001); Saito (2005a), (2005b), (2013); al-As'ad (2013); al-Hariri (2013).

³³ Grassi and al-As'ad (2013) 115–28 (with <http://users.unimi.it/progettopalmyra/pages/publicazioni.html> for publications); Delplace (2013) 37–48; Schmidt-Colinet and al-As'ad (2013). Bieliński (2005) contains many of Gawlikowski's publications; on Finlayson's excavation, see Kaizer (2016b) 929. Hinterland: Schlumberger (1951); Meyer (2009), (2011), (2013), (2016), and now (2017), the last appearing too recently to be treated in this book; Mior (2014); Schnädelbach (2010).

³⁴ *Palmyra Portrait Project*: <http://projects.au.dk/palmyraportrait/>. Kropp and Raja (2014).

³⁵ *Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project*: <https://uwdc.library.wisc.edu/collections/wpaipcoll/>.

³⁶ *Zenobia: Empress of the East*: <http://judithweingarten.blogspot.com>. It is moderated by Judith Weingarten, an archaeologist and author of *Chronicle of Zenobia* (see Weingarten (2006)), an historical novel.

But funerary portraits have limits. The many that have survived are but a tiny fraction of those that once existed.³⁷ Most tombs are now missing the majority of their portraits.³⁸ Their provenances are also largely unrecorded. Most were not inscribed. And those that were inscribed only rarely specify who made them. Some people arranged for their own sarcophagi or portraits before dying. Parents, children, siblings, extended family, guardians, and nonrelatives made others. Women were responsible for some.³⁹ We cannot make easy assumptions about the rest. Moreover, Palmyrene households and extended families tended to reuse the same personal names. This practice often prevents us from establishing reliable genealogies. Finally, many corpses could be placed in the same burial niche. They were presumably related to one another. But the funerary portrait that sealed the niche often represented only one person.⁴⁰ Such are the portraits' constraints.

Still, we can be optimistic. Palmyrene inscriptions and material culture enable us to explore women's experiences at Palmyra in compelling ways. Our chief aim is to do just that. Ancient texts say nothing about Zenobia before her marriage to Odainath, and what they do impart about her as ruler is often suspect. But by narrating what life was like for elite women at Palmyra, we can elucidate aspects of Zenobia's life that literary sources do not describe. This approach may not compensate for how little we can know about Zenobia's personality and interiority, but it can illuminate the material world that she experienced. It can also help us critique less reliable sources, like the *Historia Augusta*. As we pursue our foray into Zenobia's world, Palmyra's material sources will be vital. So will prior scholarship on women, gender, and portraits at Palmyra.⁴¹ At times, we will call upon what modern travelers and ethnographers have observed at Palmyra or among Bedouins too. These sources enable us to reconstruct key parts of Palmyra's social world. So we can situate Zenobia within it.

³⁷ Finlayson (1998) 1.19; Kropp and Raja (2014). *The Palmyra Portrait Project* has compiled more than 3000 portraits. Raja (2016a) 126–27, (2017a) 320–21.

³⁸ Finlayson (1998) 1.19 and 188–91 provides some key examples.

³⁹ Cussini (2005a) 25; PAT 0840 (=CIS 2.3.4479, Pl. 42); 0877 (=CIS 2.3.4526, Pl. 50); 0901 (=CIS 2.3.4540); 0915 (=CIS 2.3.4554, Pl. 60).

⁴⁰ Finlayson (1998) 1.107, on genealogies; Saito and Nakahashi (2016) 72; Saito (2005a) 155, on Higuchi and Saito (2001).

⁴¹ Cussini (1995), (2004), (2005a); Heyn (2010), (2016); Raja (2015a), (2016a), (2017a), (2017b); Finlayson (1998), (2003–2004), (2005), (2008), (2013); Krag (2016), (2017); Krag and Raja (2016); Yon (2002–2003); Smith (2013) 96–104.

Our aim is to craft a likeness of Zenobia that helps us glimpse the woman who lived. The task has renewed importance in light of the horrific human crisis that Syria has experienced in recent years and continues to endure. Two oppressive, brutal regimes that have massacred and dispossessed so many millions have exploited Zenobia's Palmyra for their own propagandistic purposes. Amid its spectacle of bloodshed and slaughter, the so-called Islamic State has conspicuously destroyed its monuments and images, while also looting and smuggling its portraits for cash. The Assad regime has tried to divert attention from its own massive atrocities by leveraging Zenobia's likeness and by alleging a commitment to Palmyra's preservation. The human catastrophe at hand, and Palmyra's place within it, is a legacy of Western imperial intervention, its history of looted and destroyed images, and the market it has created for them. We will return to these issues in the Epilogue. But as we witness the destruction and manipulation of likenesses, it is perhaps more urgent than ever to craft one for Zenobia that coheres with the context in which she lived: 3rd-century Palmyra.

This likeness, however, is based on my judgment of the ancient sources. It has much to share with past and future treatments of Zenobia. But it differs too. This is because history is an interpretative enterprise. Different people understand ancient evidence in different ways. They also differ in how they compensate for its absence, contradictions, and challenges. The "real" Zenobia is beyond the grasp of any single person. The sources are too piecemeal and remote from Zenobia herself. All that we can do is craft the likeness that we think best suits her. But we must do so by reflecting on the ancient evidence, however sparse. We must also give intimate attention to her Palmyrene context. Readers who encounter the images of others can then use their judgment to craft their own likeness. Such is the present aim.

But for now, we can conceive of an image of Zenobia that you and I share. To create this likeness, we will consult all the sources that we have described so far. We will add detail and texture to it as we proceed. We will first sojourn through Zenobia's Palmyra; we will follow her in procession through its religious terrain (Chapter 2). We will experience Zenobia's life as a Palmyrene child and maiden. We will explore the social composition of her Palmyra (Chapter 3), her relationships (Chapter 4),

and her transition to womanhood (Chapter 5). We will discover how fertility, mortality, marital strategies, and property transmission affected her. We will witness how Zenobia's marriage to Odainath forever shaped the course of her life (Chapters 6–7). We will visit Zenobia as she governs vast tracts of the Roman East (Chapter 8) and wages her ill-fated civil war with the Roman imperial court (Chapter 9). Finally, we will reflect upon Zenobia's afterlife among European and Middle Eastern authors (Chapter 10).

Darkness surrounds Zenobia. Shadows veil her from our sight. But now that we comprehend this darkness, we can probe its depths. We can even proceed to craft a likeness of Zenobia that illuminates her, if only in part. If we are vigilant, we might fix our gaze on Roman Syria's shooting star. We may catch her rise and fall. Or perhaps we will only get glimpses of her light. But we will look, and we will wonder.

PART I

Palmyra, Zenobia's City

2

Urban Landscape

On a sunny day sometime in the 260s, Zenobia grasped her cloak in her right hand. She covered her head and face with it and began walking. As she crossed Palmyra's monumental landscape, the smoke and fragrance of lingering incense filled the air. So did the sound of solemn hymns sung to flutes, drums, castanets, tambourines, or cymbals.¹ This was not Zenobia's first procession. Nor would it be her last. Prominent women often took part in their city's sacred rites. But reliefs from Palmyra provide extra insights. On one relief from the temple of Bel (late 1st century CE), women in processions hide their faces with their cloaks (Fig. 2.1, probably now destroyed).² They follow a camel carrying a shrine in which a sacred stone is shrouded. From reliefs like these, we can glimpse women like Zenobia as they interact with the material context of Palmyra.

For her first thirty years, Zenobia lived in Palmyra (Plans 2.1–2.2), a city of the dry Syrian steppe (Map 2.1). Located by a green oasis, it was surrounded by brown gravel, dirt, and rock. For decades Zenobia traversed its broad colonnaded streets of limestone. Throughout it she made offerings of oil, wine, and incense. She intoned prayers. Some were for the statues and reliefs of gods in temples. Others were

¹ Lucian, *DDS* 44, 50; Hierapolis-Manbog; Herodian, 5.3.8, 5.5.9; Elagabalus, Emesa; Apuleius, *Met.* 8.24–29.

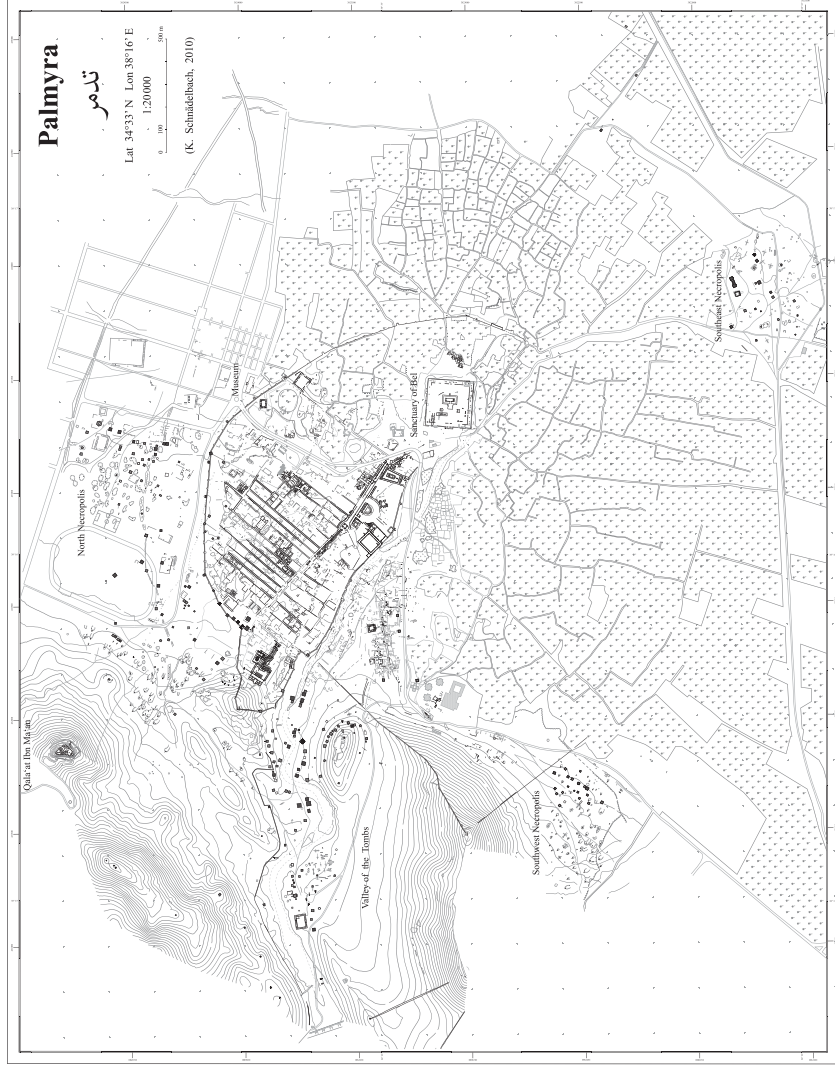
² For Fig. 2.1* and a relief from the temple of Allat, see Dirven (1998) 297–300, Fig. 1.3 (with dating); Tanabe (1986) nos. 42–44, 156; Finlayson (2013) Fig. 3.4; Smith (2013) 98–100, Figs. 4.9–10.



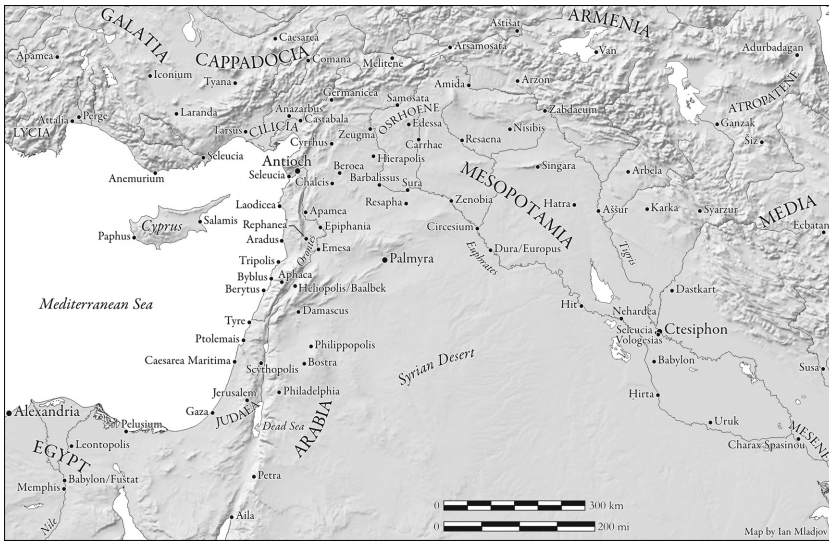
FIGURE 2.1 Relief of Veiled Women in a Religious Procession, Temple of Bel (presumed destroyed, photo by author)

for relatives in tombs. Zenobia also sought shelter from Palmyra's scorching sunlight. She drank the water from its cisterns. She ate the salt from nearby mudflats. In time, she wove together the obligations of kinship, patronage, and civic solidarity that Palmyra demanded of its notables. She embodied their harmonies and tensions. Palmyra was what Zenobia called her city in Greek, but she usually used its traditional Aramaic name: Tadmor.

Zenobia's Tadmor shaped how she understood her place in the world. It gave her the status and names that she embraced. It imparted the resources that enabled her rise to power and eternal fame. It dominated all her sensory experiences. In later chapters, we will reflect on what Zenobia's childhood at Palmyra was like. But for now, let's re-join Zenobia's procession. Let's follow her as she travels through her city. To Zenobia's city, we now turn.



PLAN 2.1 Palmyra and its hinterland (courtesy of Klaus Schnädelbach)



MAP 2.1 Roman Near East, 271 CE (courtesy of Ian Mladjov)

Palmyra: Urban Center and Rural Hinterland

When Zenobia was born, Palmyra had long been wealthy, and its social and cultural life had long been diverse. But Palmyra had not always been this way. Its origins were humbler. Palmyra was in the dry, arid stretch of the Syrian steppe east of Emesa (modern *Homs*) and northeast of Damascus. To its west and northwest were rugged mountains. Northeast were the limestone beds that provided for its buildings. South and east was a steppe of dirt, rock, and salt flats. Roughly 200 kilometers to the east, the Euphrates River wove its way southward.³

Palmyra's hinterland received more rain than a desert, especially in the north.⁴ It provided pasturage, and parts of it could even be cultivated. Modern Arabs and Bedouin call this ecology *badiyah*.⁵ Palmyra could not field much wine and olive oil, as parts of Roman Syria could. But as we will learn, Palmyrenes made remarkable use of their water sources. The countryside produced some bulk grains, with modest amounts of olives.

³ Schmidt-Colinet (1995); Seland (2016) 11–19; Smith (2013) 2–7, 70; Sommer (2005a): steppe.

⁴ Meyer (2013) 271; Smith (2013) 2; Mior (2014) 6–7; Seland (2016) 15–19. Rainfall is 50–250 mm annually.

⁵ Tlass (2000) 21; Grant (1938) 11; Gawlikowski (1997b) 37–41.

Terebinths (small trees or shrubs) supplied oil and charcoal.⁶ Pastoralism and animal husbandry were vital to life there. The city was “dimorphic.”⁷ The settled community relied on mobile shepherds and nomads for meat and dairy production, camel transport, goatskins, and fertilizer. It gave pasturage, grain products, textiles, and worked metals in return.⁸

Palmyra was on an oasis.⁹ To the south, the Efqa spring carved a largely subterranean pathway. Two dry riverbeds could gush water after heavy rain. One such *wadi* (Wadi As-Suraysir) wove its way eastward, south of the Roman monumental center. The other (Wadi Abu ‘Ubayd) meandered southward, between the city and its wondrous precinct for Bel. Near this precinct the two riverbeds joined. Other springs originating in the hinterland supplied drinking water too.¹⁰

The Efqa spring was sulfurous and not drinkable. Aided by an underground canal, it reached the surface at a grotto and basin. Palmyrenes bathed there.¹¹ They also apparently channeled its water with canals. The spring dried during the late 20th century. But the ancient oasis was vital, providing irrigation water and dates. To the south were salt flats. In Palmyra’s hinterland bushes fed grazing camels,¹² which served as kindling and firewood too.¹³ Such resources attracted Arabian nomads and pastoralists.

Palmyra was a vital node linking the vast trade routes of Asia during its commercial peak. But by the 3rd millennium BCE, Tadmor was already attracting traders moving between the southern Levant and lower Mesopotamia.¹⁴ The earliest traders traveled with donkeys. After 1000 BCE, however, they used camels.¹⁵ Pastoralists from Arabia often visited. The mound for Bel’s precinct bears witness.¹⁶ We know of violence too. A letter from Mari describes a raid at Tadmor c. 1700. Around 1100 BCE, the Assyrian king Tiglath-Pileser defeated Aramaeans there.¹⁷ After 1000,

⁶ Musil (1928a) 149. I owe this observation to J. C. Meyer, “The Bride of the Dry Steppe,” Metropolitan Museum, New York, May 23, 2016, now in Aruz (2018).

⁷ Sommer (2005a) 180–83, 213–24; (2005b) 289–93; (2016a): dimorphism. But see Scharrer (2010) 309–10.

⁸ Seland (2015a) esp. 111–18, (2015b), (2016) 19–24; Smith (2013) 50–51; Meyer (2016) 97.

⁹ Schnädelbach (2010) provides detailed maps.

¹⁰ Hammad (2010) 8–13, with n. 44; Piacentini (2001–2002); Delplace (2017) 130–31; Gawlikowski (2016c) 487.

¹¹ Hammad (2010) 10–11; Hauser (2012) 215–16; Juchniewicz and Żuchowska (2012) 63; Piacentini (2001–2002); Yon (2009a) 97–99; Sommer (2017) 28.

¹² Smith (2013) 70–71; Mandaville (2011) 87–88, 96–97; Musil (1928a) 87, 134.

¹³ Musil (1928b) 88, with Mandaville (2011) 102–4.

¹⁴ Hesse (2016); Sommer (2017) 28–34; Bronze and Iron Age Palmyra.

¹⁵ Finlayson (1998) 1.24–25, n. 17; Dalley (1984) 3–7; Seland (2015b) 46.

¹⁶ Maqdissi (2000).

¹⁷ ARM 5.23.15–20; Pritchard (1969) 274–75; Finlayson (1998) 1.24–28; Sommer (2017) 32–34.

Arabians came in waves. But for 1000 years, texts scarcely mention Tadmor. The Hebrew Bible is a lone exception. 2 Chronicles erroneously celebrates King Solomon for founding a settlement at “Tadmor in the wilderness.”¹⁸ Then in 217 BCE, an “Arabian” dynast named Zabdibel aided the Seleucid army at Raphia.¹⁹ His name is a common Palmyrene one. The oasis had attracted Aramaean and Arabian settlers by then.

The “Hellenistic settlement” was south of the Wadi As-Suraysir and north of the Efqa spring.²⁰ It was inhabited in Roman times too. Various Roman temples and civic structures were oriented toward it.²¹ Its residents imported wine, olive oil, and maybe garum (fish sauce) from Mediterranean areas.²² These built waterworks²³ and roads too.²⁴ A primary road ran along the Wadi As-Suraysir. So it divided the so-called Hellenistic settlement and the Roman monumental landscape to the north.²⁵

The residents of Hellenistic Palmyra left signs of religious piety. Modest shrines preceded the temples for Baal-Shamin (a Canaanite storm god) and Allat (an Arabian goddess).²⁶ Priests officiated over Bel’s cult in the 1st century BCE.²⁷ Residents buried their dead in an underground tomb in the city²⁸ and in graves outside it.²⁹ When Marcus Antonius threatened Palmyra in 41 BCE, the inhabitants fled eastward.³⁰ The city apparently had no circuit walls. But Palmyrenes were there. By the reign of Augustus (27 BCE–14 CE), they were identifying themselves as a “Palmyrene” or “Tadmorean” people.³¹

Hellenistic Palmyra was far removed from the city that Zenobia knew. Zenobia’s Palmyra and its hinterland encompassed huge territory. One could travel hundreds of kilometers across it. By Zenobia’s lifetime, its population was vast. Roughly 50,000 lived in the city and

¹⁸ 2 Chr 8:4. Kaizer (2010a) 116; Sommer (2017) 34. 1 Kings 9:18 has “Tamar in the wilderness.”

¹⁹ Polyb. 5.79; Hekster and Kaizer (2004) 72.

²⁰ Schmidt-Colinet (2013); Römer-Strehl (2013a); Laubenheimer (2013). Sommer (2017) 61–66 provides synthesis.

²¹ Kaizer (2015) 883.

²² See Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 268–76.

²³ Hammad (2010) 1–23; Plattner (2013); Juchniewicz and Żuchowska (2012) 62.

²⁴ Fassbinder and Linck (2013).

²⁵ Gawlikowski (2012a) 772, (2016c) 487.

²⁶ Kaizer (2002) 80, 102–3; Gawlikowski (1997a).

²⁷ *PAT* 1524.

²⁸ Fellman (1970) 111–19; de Jong (2017) 285–86.

²⁹ Saito (2005b) 34; Saito and Nakahashi (2016) 72; de Jong (2017) 286.

³⁰ Appian, *Bell. Civ.* 5.9.38–39; Hekster and Kaizer (2004); Sommer (2017) 76–81.

³¹ *PAT* 2636; *IGLS* 17.1.17–18: *gbl tdmry*; Παλμυρηνῶν ὁ δῆμος/ἡ πόλις. Smith (2013) 56–57.

250,000 in the countryside.³² Zenobia's Palmyra had impressive limestone temples and colonnaded streets. Tombs speckled its countryside. The city sported a theater and perhaps an amphitheater. These are only a few of Palmyra's remarkable features.

To learn more, let's return to Zenobia as she makes a pious circuit through her Palmyra.³³ The city's processional routes receive little documentation.³⁴ We can only form hypotheses about them. But religious festivals involved processions. Some presumably moved along Palmyra's main arteries and encountered major cult sites. Here we will accompany Zenobia as she makes her way along a hypothetical processional route. As we proceed, Plan 2.2 and Fig. 2.2 will help with orientation. An asterisk (*) will also mark the monuments of Zenobia's Palmyra that have now been destroyed or damaged (or presumed such) by the Islamic State and the Syrian civil war (Appendix 1).

Zenobia's Procession

Amid the din of prayers and hymns, Zenobia veils her face and joins the procession. Her compatriot women walk behind a camel. On its back is a small shrine covered in a shroud. In the shrine is a sacred stone or cult statue. In some processions, these could ride in a chariot. But today a camel bears it (Fig. 2.1*). Such processions of shrines and sacred objects were an Arabian tradition.³⁵ Nomads had to transport their gods when they relocated. In the Near East, likenesses of gods were often involved in processions and other rituals.³⁶ The Palmyrenes had made such customs part of their urban life.

Zenobia's procession leaves the precinct for Bel (Plan 2.2). It moves west on a broad paved road running along the Wadi As-Suraysir.³⁷ At its south is the "Hellenistic settlement." The Roman monumental center is northward. On its way, the procession travels past many key civic and sacred spaces. Sometimes the procession is several meters below them in elevation.

³² Smith (2013) 81–82.

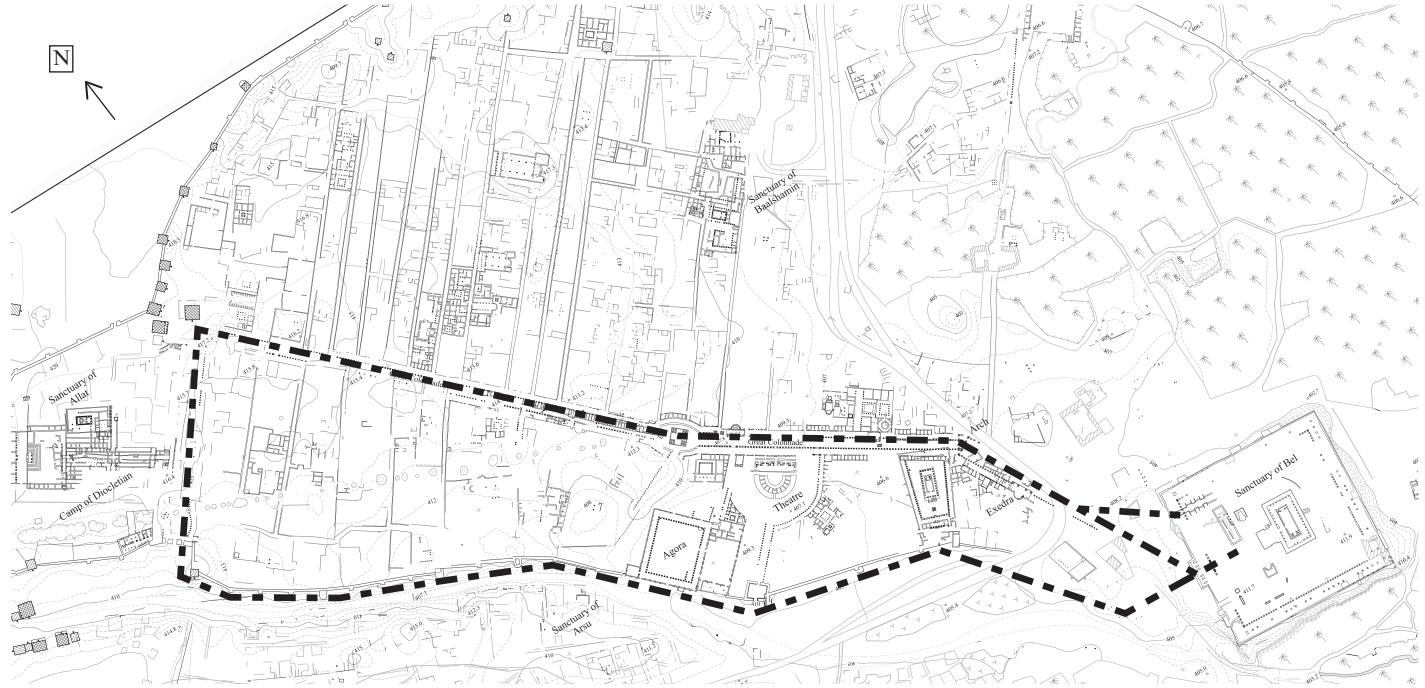
³³ My excursus is inspired by Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 14–22; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 54–60; Jakubiak (2013); Bührig (2016); Gawlikowski (2016c); Sommer (2017) 180–95; Delplace (2017) esp. 112–13. By necessity, it omits many features.

³⁴ Kaizer (2002) 200–3; Le Bihan (2013) 241–42; Jakubiak (2013).

³⁵ Lammens (1928) 127–42; Finlayson (2013) 66–67; Le Bihan (2013) 237–38.

³⁶ Dirven (2015) 264–66.

³⁷ Gawlikowski (2012a); Jakubiak (2013).



PLAN 2.2 Palmyra (courtesy of Klaus Schnädelbach; orientation and hypothetical processional route added by N. Andrade, based on principal thoroughfares outlined by Gawlikowski (2016c) Fig. 8 and Jakubiak (2013) Figs. 7–8; content of plan not period specific)



FIGURE 2.2 Great Colonnade, with precinct for Bel in distance (photo by Shutterstock, Inc.)

One key space is the sacred precinct for “Nebu.” Prominent Palmyrenes, principally from two households, financed it during the late 1st–2nd centuries. Situated on a large platform, the temple was encircled by Corinthian columns. A massive court enclosed by columns surrounded it. The Palmyrenes worshipped various gods there. But modern scholars have named it after Nabu, a Babylonian god. The temple faces southward as Zenobia moves past the precinct’s entrance.³⁸

Moving west along the paved road, Zenobia encounters the small temple for the god Rab’asire. Across the street, Zenobia passes the large inscribed stone slabs of Palmyra’s famous Tax Law.³⁹ The agora (a central civic area) is now immediately to her north (Fig. 2.3). The Palmyrenes had built it in increments over the previous two centuries.⁴⁰ An open space enclosed by walls and columns, it was like a Roman forum. It housed numerous statues and inscriptions honoring Palmyra’s notables. An adjacent basilica, banquet hall, and assembly room served Palmyra’s councilmen and citizens.⁴¹

³⁸ Bounni (1992–2004), with 2.47–48 for families; Kaizer (2002) 89–99; Delplace (2017) 49–54.

³⁹ Gawlikowski (2012a).

⁴⁰ Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy (2005a), (2005b) 349–54; Delplace (2017) 64–70.

⁴¹ Delplace and Dentzer-Feydy (2005a) 117–50, 277–88, with Kaizer (2008b) 655; Delplace (2017) 71–77.



FIGURE 2.3 Agora of Palmyra (photo by Shutterstock, Inc.)

As the procession moves west, its members pass the temple of Arsu to the south. Though a modest temple, the Palmyrenes treated it as one of their four main sanctuaries. Oriented southward, it faces the Efqā spring.⁴² The procession can now follow a street north to the tetrapylon (a four-pillared monument) and the Great Colonnade. But it continues west, south of one of Palmyra's main residential areas. When it reaches the city's west end, it turns north onto a colonnaded street. Zenobia is now at "the Transversal Colonnade."

The Transversal Colonnade took shape mostly in the 2nd century. Its building was incremental. Prominent Palmyrenes donated columns and their roofing. They also associated it with a nearby precinct for Allat.⁴³ Some even dedicated columns to her and other gods (like Shamash and Rahim).⁴⁴ A certain Šoraiku, son of Hairan, donated seven columns.⁴⁵ Colonnaded streets were hallmarks of Greek city-states in the eastern Roman Empire.⁴⁶ By building a colonnaded street, Palmyrene notables created a material and semantic link to such cities.

⁴² Kaizer (2002) 116–23.

⁴³ There was probably another. Gawlikowski (2001).

⁴⁴ *PAT* 0301.

⁴⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.113. Also Delplace (2017) 76.

⁴⁶ Burns (2017).

As Zenobia's procession moves north, it encounters the aforementioned precinct devoted to Allat.

Allat was the name that Palmyrenes used for an Arabian goddess in Palmyrenean. In Greek they called her Athena. Her reliefs or statues portrayed her as seated between two lions or as a woman warrior. The temple of Allat was relatively small, but it was prominent. Its final form had Roman features. Its inner sanctuary housed a cult statue or relief. Its anteroom was fronted by columns. The inner sanctuary clearly preserved an earlier shrine. But over the 1st–2nd centuries CE, many Palmyrenes contributed to a larger limestone temple and a rectangular courtyard fronted by columns.⁴⁷ As she moves past the precinct, Zenobia encounters a massive statue of a lion with an antelope between its paws.* It bore an inscription prohibiting animal sacrifice in the precinct.⁴⁸ Making her way north along the Transversal Colonnade, Zenobia comes to an intersection. Turning east, she faces the Great Colonnade.

The Great Colonnade, reconstructed by modern archaeologists, is remarkable (Fig. 2.2*). The Palmyrenes built it in segments during the preceding two centuries in tandem with new residential areas.⁴⁹ But they were acting under constraints. Normally, a central colonnade would simply bisect the urban terrain. But at Palmyra's east side, existing buildings and spaces did not accommodate this. So Zenobia's Great Colonnade consisted of three segments with different orientations. Impressive nonetheless, it was flanked by fountains fed by pipes. A sewer ran beneath it.⁵⁰

Moving through a monumental gate, Zenobia travels eastward along the Great Colonnade's western segment.⁵¹ Streets lead north to the sacred precinct for Baal-Shamin (Fig. 2.4*). Today Zenobia bypasses them, but the precinct was still an important one. The temple of Baal-Shamin had a Roman-style exterior. It bore Corinthian columns at the front. Members of the tribe, the "sons of Ma'ziyan," built it incrementally over the 1st–2nd centuries. The temple replaced a modest shrine overlooking graves to the immediate west. Numerous courtyards

⁴⁷ Gawlikowski (2008) 397–99; Kaizer (2002) 99–108; Delplace (2017) 55–59. For Gawlikowski's publications preceding 2005, see Bieliński (2005) xi–xix.

⁴⁸ Gawlikowski (2008) 407–8; *PAT* 1122. For restoration work, <https://en.unesco.org/news/restoration-completed-lion-al-lat-statue-ancient-city-palmyra-damaged-isil>.

⁴⁹ Barański (1995) 37–39; Żuchowska (2000), (2003), (2007); Gawlikowski (2016c) 487–88; Delplace (2017) 76–79. For donations, *IGLS* 73, 93–100 (with 81–82 for the "basilica of Ares"); *PAT* 1131, 1539–42.

⁵⁰ Crouch (1975b) 179–81; Żuchowska (2003); Bounni (1992–2004) 2.19; Delplace (2017) 122–25.

⁵¹ Żuchowska (2010): western gate.



FIGURE 2.4 Temple of Baal-Shamin (now destroyed, photo by author)

surrounded it. Baal-Shamin's presence at Palmyra was an Aramaean contribution. Palmyrenes worshipped Darahlun, Rahim, Shamash, and other gods at the precinct too.⁵²

Proceeding eastward, Zenobia moves through a prominent tetrapylon (Fig. 2.5*). Largely reconstructed by archaeologists,⁵³ it marked the intersection of two of the Great Colonnade's segments. In fact, it disguised an abrupt shift in direction. Its pillars were made of Egyptian granite. The Palmyrenes imported expensive granite or marble from various places, including Greece, Asia Minor, and Egypt.⁵⁴

Having crossed the tetrapylon, Zenobia encounters to the south a structure that may have been the "Caesareum." If so, Palmyrenes worshipped the Roman emperor there. Farther south and east is the agora, which we have already contemplated. Palmyra's theater, not quite finished, is next (Fig. 2.6*). Archaeologists have reconstructed

⁵² Collart et al. (1969–2000); Kaizer (2002) 79–88; Delplace (2017) 38–48.

⁵³ Dodge (1988) 223–24; Delplace (2017) 216.

⁵⁴ Dodge (1988); Wielgosz (2005), (2013); Barański (1995); *IGLS* 17.1.319. Also *IGLS* 17.1.120, which mentions Odainath or Wahballath.



FIGURE 2.5 Tetrapylon (now destroyed, photo by author)



FIGURE 2.6 Theater (now damaged, photo by Shutterstock, Inc.)

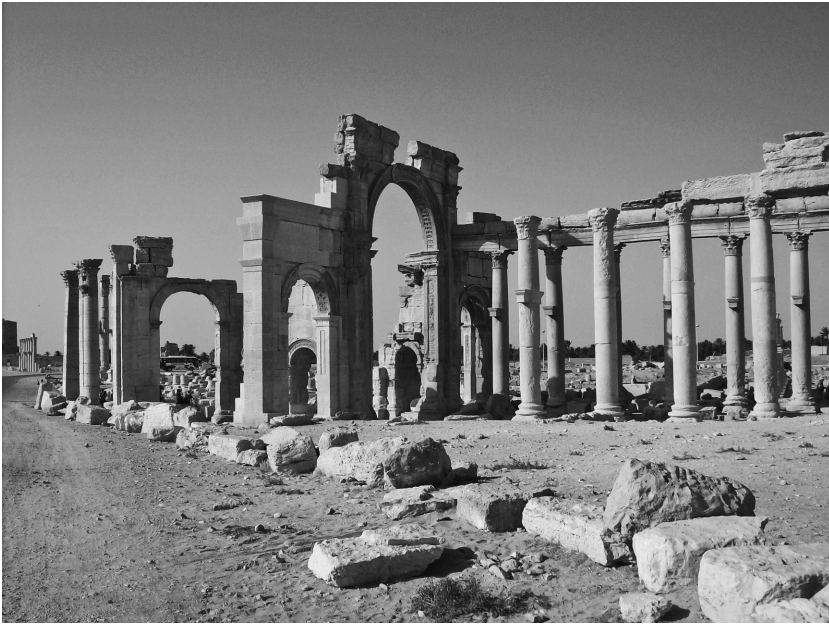


FIGURE 2.7 Monumental Arch (now destroyed, photo by author)

it. There the civic council assembled to address public matters.⁵⁵ Greek dramas and pantomimes were probably performed there too. Beyond it, the Great Colonnade gives way at its north to a bath complex. Built in the 2nd century or after, the baths were later restored under the emperor Diocletian (285–305).⁵⁶ The baths were in various places paved or veneered with imported marble.⁵⁷ But Zenobia does not visit the baths today. The procession now travels along the north end of the precinct for “Nebu.”⁵⁸ As Zenobia passes through a monumental arch (Fig. 2.7*), it bears an inscription honoring her stepson.⁵⁹

Turning southeast at the Great Colonnade’s final bend, Zenobia’s procession approaches the precinct for Bel.⁶⁰ Situated on a mound, it consisted of a huge paved court enclosed by rows of columns. Restored

⁵⁵ Bounni (2005); Seigne (2005); Delplace (2017) 115–17. For “Caesareum,” Kaizer (2002) 148–51.

⁵⁶ Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 17; Dodge (1988) 227; Delplace (2017) 119–22.

⁵⁷ See p. 29, n. 54.

⁵⁸ Barański (1995) 38.

⁵⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.61.

⁶⁰ Seyrig, Amy, and Will (1968–1975); Kaizer (2002) 67–79; Delplace (2017) 15–35. A plaza, yet undiscovered, perhaps preceded the gate. Gawlikowski (2016c) 489.



FIGURE 2.8 Temple of Bel (now destroyed, photo by author)

in modern times, its temple was on a podium and surrounded by Corinthian columns (Fig. 2.8*). It had replaced an earlier temple in which Palmyrenes had worshipped an indigenous god named Bol along with his consorts Yarhibol and Aglibol, gods closely linked to the sun and moon. At its north and south ends, its unique interior had two inner sanctuaries that housed cult statues or reliefs. Most ancient temples only held one sanctuary. Wealthy Palmyrenes had contributed incrementally to this unique outlay during the 1st century.⁶¹ Under Babylonian influence, the Palmyrenes reconstituted Bol as Bel. But Yarhibol and Aglibol continued to accompany him as part of a divine “constellation.”⁶² The massive temple and court were at the heart of the Palmyrene religion. It is there that Zenobia’s procession ends.

Other sacred sites were not located on Zenobia’s processional route. But they merit mention. The Efqa spring was one key site. We have learned how it could be accessed in a basin south of the Hellenistic settlement. In inscriptions, Palmyrenes sometimes conceived of the god Yarhibol as appointing an overseer for the spring, even if no surviving dedications there mention him.⁶³ In a place called the “sacred garden” Palmyrenes worshipped Aglibol and Malakbel. It was a vital cult site, but its location remains debated. On a mount to the south (Jebel Muntar), Baal-Hammon received worship.⁶⁴ Finally, the Aramaean goddess Atargatis had a temple somewhere at Palmyra. Inscriptions describe her sacred site as a significant civic one. Atargatis was popular in the

⁶¹ Kaizer (2006).

⁶² Kaizer (2002) 67–74. For “constellation,” not “triad,” see Kaizer (2016a).

⁶³ Kaizer (2002) 143–47.

⁶⁴ Kaizer (2002) 108–16, 124–42.

Roman Near East. Throughout the Roman Empire, she was known as “the Syrian goddess.” She had major cult sites at Hierapolis-Manbog in Syria and on the Greek island of Delos, and she also had a temple at Dura-Europos.⁶⁵ We can assume that Zenobia frequented these other sacred sites at Palmyra too.

But the temple of Bel is the focus of Zenobia and her compatriots today.⁶⁶ The procession ascends a ramp leading through the gateway into the precinct. Or it moves through a tunnel giving access.⁶⁷ Perhaps removing her cloak from her face, Zenobia continues to cover her hair. She also bears a libation offering, provided by an attendant.⁶⁸ Now Bel’s priests perform sacred acts. They have shaved their heads and faces for the occasion.⁶⁹ North of the temple’s entrance is an altar adorned with flowers, garlands, incense, and perfumed wine. It is covered with burning coals. It is here that the bulls, cows, goats, or sheep are sacrificed; their blood and cuts of meat are roasted on the altar. Bread and cereals enriched with salt, frankincense, myrrh, or perfumed oil are burnt on it too. Incense burners surrounding the altar emit fragrances. At the altar the priests pour Zenobia’s libations.⁷⁰ Stretching her arms to the sky (Fig. 4.2), Zenobia prays and sings with her compatriots. Eventually, the priests escort the sacred stone into the temple and its southern sanctuary.⁷¹ Terraced ramps give access to both. Sacred banquets are to follow. But Zenobia now disappears from our view. Her role becomes murky.

We have now completed our trip with Zenobia across the physical terrain of her Palmyra. Its material presences had a huge impact on her lived experiences. But they were not alone. We must now reflect on Palmyra’s social organization. For it, too, shaped who Zenobia was and became.

⁶⁵ Lightfoot (2003); Duchâteau (2013) 225–71; Will (1985).

⁶⁶ Seyrig, Amy, and Will (1968–1975); Delplace (2017) 15–35.

⁶⁷ Le Bihan (2013) 235–36.

⁶⁸ A relief depicts libation bearers. Le Bihan (2013) 240, Fig. 13; Finlayson (2013) Fig. 2; Colledge (1976) Pl. 26; Tanabe (1986) Fig. 135; Smith (2013) 101–2, Fig. 4.11.

⁶⁹ Raja (2016a, 2017b, 2017c): priests.

⁷⁰ On offerings, Kaizer (2002) 177–200; (2008a); Delplace (2017) 24–26.

⁷¹ Le Bihan (2013) 235–36.

Social Landscape

In her maturity, Zenobia became the most powerful person in Palmyra. She was nearly the most powerful person in the Roman Empire. But even Zenobia was defined by limits. People do not cultivate selfhood in isolation. They learn who they are and their place in the world over time. They do it through social relations from an early age. Zenobia did too.

Zenobia enjoyed many social relations. Her Palmyra was a mesh of extended families and tribes that perpetuated many Aramaean and Arabian traditions. They adopted others from the contemporary Near East. Her Palmyrenes practiced their own variant of Greek political life. They felt the profound impact of Roman imperialism. They harvested vast wealth through a commercial network that reached India. Amid it all, Zenobia's Palmyra was a vibrant place. Zenobia encountered gods, languages, and culture with diverse origins, all of which shaped who Zenobia became.

Families, Clans, Tribes, and Nomads

In 52 CE, a woman named Amatallat made an inscribed dedication for the god Baal-Shamin:

In the month Tebet, year 363,
 Amatallat, **daughter** (*b[r]t*) of Bar'ea,
son (*br*) of Atenatan, who is from the
daughters of Mita (*bnt myt'*), wife of
 Taima, **son** (*br*) of Belhazai, **son** (*br*)

of Zabdibel, who is from **the tribe of the sons of Ma'ziyan** (*phd bny m'zyn*), offered this column to Baal-Shamin, good and generous god, for her life and the lives of **her sons** (*bnyh*) and the life of her brother (or brothers: *'hyh*).¹

The inscription is dense. It invokes Amatallat's immediate and remote kin. It stresses her patrilineal ancestry from which we learn of her father, grandfather, and husband. We also discover her tribe. She belonged to "the daughters of Mita." Amatallat's father and brother were among its "sons" (*bny*).²

Patrilineal descent foremost defined one's place in the Palmyrene community. So Amatallat identified herself by her father, grandfather, and tribe. This practice was common in ancient societies, including Arabian peoples. Among them, matrilineal descent could govern social relations.³ But patrilineal relations foremost determined jural authority and obligations.⁴ One should understand Palmyrenes like Amatallat in such terms. She inherited her tribal status from her father and grandfather.

Amatallat's inscription also sheds light on her husband's social universe. She identifies him, his father, and his grandfather. She also specifies his tribe (*phd*): the sons (*bny*) of Ma'ziyan. Her inscription pinpoints how ambiguous the terms for son (*br*), sons (*bny*), daughter (*bt* or *brt*), and daughters (*bnt*) were. These could identify a person's links to parents, remote ancestors, tribes, or virtually any group. They have posed complications in our effort to understand Zenobia's ancestry.

Intriguingly Amatallat made her dedication "for the life" of her children and her siblings. Often translated as "sons," *bny* can include daughters. The term *'hyh*, or "her brother(s)," is also ambiguous. It could be singular or plural. If plural, it included sisters. Amatallat valued her children and her husband's household. But like many Palmyrenes, she also treasured her siblings and natal household. This disposition was typical at Palmyra. We will explore its implications for Zenobia later.

¹ PAT 0168; Smith (2013) 41; Dunant (1971) no. 11.

² IGLS 17.1.12, 50, 535; PAT 0457, 0465: *phd bny myt'*. In Greek/Latin, the tribe was called *phylē Mithenōn/phyle Mithenon*.

³ Hoyland (2001) 128–30; Finlayson (2008, 2014), on Palmyrenes.

⁴ Hoyland (2001) 128–30; Lancaster (1997) 151: "jural" authority.

As Amattallat's inscription hints, Zenobia's Palmyra was a dense web of kinship. Families, clans, and tribes were its filaments. The Palmyrenes inherited these social forms from their Arabian forbears. But they were fluid throughout Palmyra's history. Actual and immediate bloodlines often determine how people understand their social world. But social relationships can create new beliefs about extended kinship, remote ancestry, and even ethnicity over time. The Bedouin are famous for this.⁵ Palmyrene social relations were dynamic and living too. They were not static and inert.

At Zenobia's Palmyra, kinship and ancestry determined key relationships. Inscriptions, statues, funerary portraits, and tombs at Palmyra provide testimony. A father usually had jural authority over a Palmyrene household (*byth*, "his house"). All who lived in it were its "sons" (*bny byt*), including his children, wife, slaves, and perhaps other relatives and in-laws.⁶ As such, the Palmyrene household was a flexible unit.⁷ But women could sometimes exercise jural authority over it.⁸ We will see how this enabled Zenobia's rise to power.

Palmyrenes also had extended family. Beyond their households (or within them), Palmyrenes bonded with grandparents, uncles and aunts, and first cousins. But households and their extended families could invent links to common remote ancestors. By identifying themselves as an ancestor's "sons" (*bny*), they could become members of a clan (*phd*). It is hard to identify clans in inscriptions. The term "sons" (*bny*) could denote clan, parental, or tribal ties.⁹ But a bilingual inscription made by four brothers tells us that the "sons of Ba'a" were descended from their great-great-grandfather Gaddarsu, "also called Baa."¹⁰ One can find other probable examples.¹¹ Clans were meaningful social units at Palmyra.

Clans belonged to tribes (*phd* or *phz*, but *phylē* in Greek)¹² that allegedly shared some remote ancestor.¹³ Tribal relations could steer

⁵ Lancaster (1997) 151.

⁶ Smith (2013) 87–88. *PAT* 0324, 0343, 0355, 0379, 0382, 0394, 0397, 0400(?), 1435, 1437, 1445–46, 1448, 1452, 1666, 1900, 1911, 1920.

⁷ On ancient and Palmyrene households, see Huebner (2011); Smith (2013) 84–91.

⁸ *PAT* 0095: "guardian . . . of her son" (*mpnsyt*. . . *brh*). See p. 77, n. 143, p. 123, n. 74, and p. 126, n. 94.

⁹ Smith (2013) 41, with nn. 47–48.

¹⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.406, with *PAT* 0275, 0462, 0474–81; Yon (2013) no. 12. Yon (2001) 81; Smith (2013) 89.

¹¹ Yon (2001) 278; Drijvers (1995b) 111–12; Kaizer (2002) 79; Yon (2013) no. 57; al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012) no. 50; *IGLS* 17.1.21, 312; *PAT* 0061.

¹² Piersimoni (1995a) 252–54: *phd* is an Arabic loan; Sommer (2005b); Smith (2013) 40–49. For Arabic words in Palmyrenean, Maraqtan (1995).

¹³ Among Bedouin, Mandaville (2011) 38–39; Lancaster and Lancaster (1992) esp. 154–55; Lancaster (1997) 26–28, 154; Musil (1928a) 46–49.

Palmyrenes to venerate certain cults, have houses or tombs in certain places, or marry fellow tribesmen. Yet, tribes did not necessarily have their own formal territory or necropoleis. Second-century inscriptions sometimes linked certain sanctuaries to the “four tribes.” But these were probably civic groupings. The official tribal sanctuaries also changed over time. The “four tribes” did not necessarily live near them.¹⁴ Not being static units, kinship tribes were probably umbrella categories in which Palmyrenes could mold flexible relationships. But social bonds often transcended them too. We have seen how Amatallat and her husband belonged to different tribes.

By Zenobia’s day, Palmyrenes had largely ceased to stress clan or tribal affiliations in their inscriptions. Civic categories and patronage ties had precedence.¹⁵ But kinship tethers still shaped how Palmyrenes defined themselves and their compatriots. Zenobia navigated kinship’s intricate web. Her household boasted of its male ancestors. It maintained relations with extended family. It forged and even invented bonds with its clan and tribe. But we know little about Zenobia’s kin. We will revisit this issue when we meet the child Zenobia. But we will now consider the civic world that Zenobia navigated and came to rule.

Political Institutions and Civic Structures

In 74 CE, the civic council of Palmyra honored a notable citizen named Hairan.¹⁶ He had apparently funded the construction of some temples. His statue stood on a column south of the agora. Its trilingual inscription reads:

Latin:	The civic council and community of Palmyrenes (honor) Haeranes, son of Bonna, who is also Rabbelus, dutiful and patriotic.
Greek:	The civic council and people (honor) Hairanes, son of Bonnes, who

¹⁴ Kaizer (2002) 62–63, (2008b) 654–55; Smith (2013) 135–45. In *IGLS* 17.1.307, *nwyt* probably refers to a comparison, not tribal proximity. But see Finlayson (1998), esp. 1.705.

¹⁵ Sommer (2005a) 213–24 (esp. 217–19), (2008) 294–98, 309–15, (2017) 218–20; Yon (2001) 139–50; Hartmann (2016) 61–62; Hauser (2016); Smith (2013) 117–18.

¹⁶ *IGLS* 17.1.12, 535; Hairan.

is also Rabbelos, pious and
patriotic founder, in his honor. In the year
385, the month Xandikos.

Palmyrenean: The civic council and people for
Hairan, son of Bonne, who is called
Rabbēl, who adorns the buildings of
the gods and is a friend of his city. They
raised for him this statue in his honor.
In the month Nisan, the year 385.¹⁷

As the inscription hints, Zenobia's Palmyra had a strong civic ethos. Its kinship ties did not undermine civic identities. The two elements fortified each other. So Palmyrenes made benefactions to their city's temples and monuments. By so doing, they promoted their kin before their citizen peers. But they also celebrated how their civic community benefited from the work of households, clans, and tribes.

Zenobia's Palmyra was also a Roman imperial city. Its unique social relations and culture did not negate this fact. The Palmyrenes' discretion over their own affairs did not either. The Palmyrenes answered to the oversight of the Roman Empire. But they forged relationships with Roman authorities that afforded them privileges. By the 1st century CE, they were Roman subjects but largely on their own terms. The trilingualism of Hairan's inscription bears witness to that.

Palmyra was in a remote region where the Roman and Parthian empires met. But in the opening decades of the 1st century, it became a part of Roman Syria as a provincial city or a client state.¹⁸ In 19 CE, Germanicus, the nephew of Emperor Tiberius, visited while reforming the Roman Empire's eastern territories. A legionary commander also honored the imperial family with statues at the precinct of Bel.¹⁹ Shortly before, the governor of Syria had defined the boundary of Emesa and "the Palmyrene region."²⁰ A decade later, soldiers recruited at Damascus buried a comrade there.²¹ Even so, the Palmyrenes exercised much discretion over their local affairs. This arrangement sometimes confused

¹⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.304.

¹⁸ Yon (2010); Southern (2008) 20–24; Sommer (2017) 81–87, 119–23 discuss this matter.

¹⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.3.

²⁰ *IGLS* 5.2550 (153 CE) describes the activity of Creticus Silanus, governor 11–17 CE. Smith (2013) 2.

²¹ Gawlikowski (2010c) 49–54; *IGLS* 17.1.450.

even first-century Roman senators, like Pliny the Elder. He claimed that Palmyra had its own “lot” between the Roman and Parthian empires.²² It may have seemed so to the uninformed. Pliny even describes Palmyra as fertile. But his information was not strictly true. On the contrary, the Palmyrenes were forging increasingly intensive bonds with contemporary Greek city-states (*poleis*) in Roman Syria. Emulating their civic structures, the Palmyrenes identified themselves as citizens (Greek: *poleitai*) of their city (Greek: *polis*) or as “sons of the city” (Palmyrenean: *bny mdynt’*, less often as a *gbl*). They did so while celebrating the importance of their households, extended families, clans, and tribes.²³

Roman authorities expected Palmyrenes to comply in taxation and defense. So a Roman tax collector stationed at Palmyra was buried there in 58 CE. Others were there in subsequent decades.²⁴ Tribal elites organized military affairs. These navigated sedentary and nomadic interests.²⁵ They also presumably controlled land and pasturage, invested in commerce, and protected caravans. During the 3rd century, a few such elites, like Zenobia’s Odainath, would acquire overwhelming power, wealth, and clientage. But even so, tribal elites communicated their activities within the conceptual framework of Syria’s Greek *poleis*. So Zenobia’s Palmyra was governed by a civic council (Greek: *boulē*). Consisting of tribal elites, the council passed laws and decrees, ensured order, and appointed magistrates.²⁶ One of its most famous documents is Palmyra’s Tax Law, which we will revisit. The council also promoted competition among elites to perform exemplary civic deeds (*politeia*). For tribal elites, these could include organizing defense, protecting caravans, or funding public buildings and temples.²⁷ The council honored such figures with statues made of bronze, or sometimes marble from Greece or Anatolia,²⁸ and accompanying inscriptions. The precinct of Bel, the agora, and the Great Colonnade had hordes of them. Moments ago, we encountered the civic council at work. It sponsored

²² Pliny, *NH* 5.88: *privata sorte inter duo imperia summa Romanorum Parthorumque*; Smith (2013) 1; Sartre and Sartre (2016) 33–38.

²³ Key formulations: Yon (2001) 1–99; Sommer (2005a) 170–212, (2005b), (2017) 104–14, 126–37; Smith (2013) 33–54, 121–50; Andrade (2012), (2013) 177–209.

²⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.536, with 196–97.

²⁵ Sommer (2015a), (2016a), (2017) 214–20.

²⁶ For Palmyra’s civic system, Smith (2013) 121–42; Sommer (2017) 104–14, 128–37, 200–20.

²⁷ Smith (2013) 78–79, 118–19; Andrade (2013) 194–204; Sommer (2017) 132–34.

²⁸ *PTL* (iic.128–29: Palmyrenean) taxes bronze statues. Wielgosz (2010): marble.

the statue and trilingual inscription that honored Hairan for his exemplary benefactions. In her lifetime, Zenobia's husband Odainath and presumably her father Antiochus served on this civic body.

Receiving honors from the civic council was a great distinction. But the council did not act in isolation. Tribes, clans, and families promoted their own kinsmen in the same fashion. Sometimes the so-called "four tribes" honored conspicuous citizens at the "tribal" sanctuaries.²⁹ Some Palmyrenes were even honored by kinsmen, tribes, and the civic council during their careers. Public statues and inscriptions communicated to Palmyrenes that kinship and citizenship were harmonious. They pitted families and tribes in a competition to determine who Palmyra's best citizens were. The "patriotic" (Greek: *philopatrides*) and "friends of their city" (Palmyrenean: *rhymy mdythwn*) brought honor to their tribes and households.³⁰ We have already encountered how Zenobia earned honorary statues. We will see how other women did too.

Sometimes, the civic council, tribes, and families granted honors in coordination. In the 170s, a man named Šoraiku donated many columns to the Transversal Colonnade. So he earned a statue and inscription from the council in 179.³¹ His tribe and household promoted themselves too. In the same year, the "sons of Zabdibol" honored his brother and son.³² Šoraiku celebrated his wife Marthi.³³ All their statues and inscriptions formed a unit on columns of the Transversal Colonnade. Šoraiku's tribesmen had promoted the merits of some of their own. This perhaps followed Arabian or Aramaean traditions. But the public display of statues and inscriptions for a citizen audience was the practice of contemporary Greeks. Citizen and tribal allegiances were intimately linked. Customs of diverse origins complemented one another. Such was the civic context that Zenobia navigated.

The competition for honor was not merely internal. The Palmyrenes also competed with other communities of Roman Syria for prestige. When the emperor Hadrian visited Palmyra in 129, a notable named Malê Agrippa distributed olive oil to his staff and soldiers. He also dedicated an amplified version of the temple of Baal-Shamin.³⁴ Malê

²⁹ *IGLS* 149, 222, 307. Kaizer (2002) 43–66, (2008b) 654–55; Smith (2013) 133–42.

³⁰ This recurs in *IGLS* 17.1.

³¹ *IGLS* 17.1.113.

³² *IGLS* 17.1.114–16.

³³ *IGLS* 17.1.117.

³⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.145; Taylor (2002) 322–23; Sommer (2017) 128–31.

certainly used the occasion to form social connections to Hadrian's court and to Roman officers. He was promoting himself. But he was also showing Roman authorities that Palmyrenes embraced the aspirations of Greek civic communities, where the generosity of leading citizens and gymnastic pursuits abounded.³⁵ Hadrian, a lover of Greek culture, perhaps appreciated the gesture. In fact, Palmyrenes began calling themselves *Hadrianos*. Palmyrenes in Egypt, Bahrain, and Rome still bore it a century later. In that time, Palmyrenes also nurtured ties to Roman emperors, governors, and soldiers even as they promoted themselves and their city.³⁶ We will soon encounter the letters of praise that Roman governors wrote for a notable named Šo'adu. And later we will learn how Zenobia's Odainath ingratiated himself to Roman authorities.

The Palmyrenes organized their own military defenses, presumably with the support of local nomads.³⁷ But they also fulfilled an obligation to the Roman state. They managed the dry steppe to their east. Their horse and dromedary archers, commanded by a "general (*strategos*) against the nomads," confronted raiders in the hinterland. They prevented conflicts between farmers and nomads. Their presence has left traces in the forts of the north- and southwest hinterland³⁸ and at Ana, Gamla, Dura-Europos, and other Euphrates defenses.³⁹ A specific general apparently kept order in Palmyra.⁴⁰ The arrangement worked. The Roman army placed burdens of defense on the Palmyrenes and their tribal elite. These shouldered them to protect their commerce. In turn, the Palmyrenes accrued combat experience. This tradition would later empower Odainath and Zenobia.

The Roman army maintained a presence at Palmyra. Units were headquartered there or at nearby places.⁴¹ Officers visited for both political and personal business. They were vital contacts, patrons, and friends for Palmyrene elites.⁴² We have already mentioned how tax collectors

³⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.221: gymnasiarch. For Greeks/gymnasium, the Syriac *Book of the Laws of the Countries* (c. 225 CE) in Drijvers (1965) 52–53, Ramelli (2009) 191.

³⁶ *IGLS* 17.1.245; *PAT* 0247; *SEG* 34.1593; Waddington (1870) 2440; *IGLS* 5.2552.

³⁷ Smith (2013) 129–30, 144–48; Hartmann (2016) 55; Sommer (2015a) 18, (2016a) 13; Southern (2008) 24–27.

³⁸ Meyer (2016) 99–100.

³⁹ *PAT* 0200, 0319, 3757; *IGLS* 17.1.222, with perhaps Yon (2013) no. 154. Young (2001) 158–59; Kennedy and Northedge (1988) 6–9; Smith (2013) 144–48, 153; Southern (2008) 24–27; Schlumberger (1951); Meyer (2009, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017); Mior (2014) 45–84.

⁴⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.307 (with commentary); Southern (2008) 37–38.

⁴¹ Isaac (2000) 143–44.

⁴² *IGLS* 17.1 contains many examples.

frequented the city. They collected one-fourth of the value of all imports (*tetartē*). Zenobia's Palmyrenes made the Roman Empire some serious money.⁴³

Zenobia's Palmyrenes also contributed to the Roman army. By the early 2nd century, they formed a dromedary unit that apparently maintained a local presence.⁴⁴ Other 2nd-century units expatriated. Palmyrene *numeri* (an ill-defined type of military unit) were stationed in Dacia (now Romania) and Numidian North Africa (now Algeria). Their descendants were joining Roman legions and auxiliary units over the next century. They also made temples and inscribed offerings for Palmyrene gods.⁴⁵ A veteran and municipal councilor named Publius Aelius Theimes embodied these trends in Dacia.⁴⁶ We are also now familiar with the Twentieth Cohort of Palmyrenes. It was stationed at Dura-Europos, and its surviving papyrus reports inform us about its social composition. A wall painting from Dura-Europos depicts the cohort as worshipping its gods.⁴⁷ We will learn how Odainath and Zenobia came to command the Roman Empire's military strength in Syria. By then, most of its soldiers were Syrian, many of them Palmyrene.

During the 2nd century, Palmyrene notables filled equestrian and military posts. These would anticipate the duties that Odainath and Zenobia assumed a century later. A Palmyrene named Marcus Ulpius Malichos occupied three posts in the early 2nd century. He may have commanded troops on the Rhine frontier.⁴⁸ Palmyrenes also served as Rome's client dynasts in the wilderness between Palmyra and the Persian Gulf. Šo'adu, son of Boliada thus earned letters of praise from the emperor Antoninus Pius and the imperial governor of Syria. He even established a temple for the Roman Augusti in Vologasias, eastward beyond imperial borders.⁴⁹ The Palmyrenes participated in the imperial cult.⁵⁰ We know that Odainath and Zenobia were worshippers.⁵¹

⁴³ A tomb inscription tallies either a caravan's haul or its tariff. *PAT* 2634; de Romanis (2006) 63–69. For tax collectors, see n. 24.

⁴⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.202, with 201 documenting an archer unit. Some Palmyrene dromedary troops were perhaps at Arabian Hegra (Laila Nehmé, "Crises, Changes, and Transitions at Ancient Hegra," Lecture at Potenza, June 5, 2017); Seyrig (1941) 219–20.

⁴⁵ Equini Schneider (1988); Gorea (2010); Smith (2013) 163–73.

⁴⁶ Haynes (2013) 379–81.

⁴⁷ *P. Dura*, nos. 54–130; Pollard (2000) 142–47; Smith (2013) 151–60; Dirven (2007).

⁴⁸ *IGLS* 17.1.8, with commentary; *CIL* 13.6606=*ILS* 2624.

⁴⁹ Milik (1972) 13 (= *PAT* 1062, *SEG* 7.135); *IGLS* 17.1.127, 150. On this figure, pp. 43–44, nn. 61–64.

⁵⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.149, 351. Kaizer (2002) 148–512; Gawlikowski and al-As'ad (2010) 43–48.

⁵¹ *IGLS* 17.1.120; **Appendix 3**, 5c.

The Palmyrenes also apparently sponsored Roman games. An amphitheater marked the landscape northeast of Roman Palmyra.⁵² Detectable through aerial photographs, it has not been excavated. It suggests that Palmyrenes were staging gladiatorial spectacles, beast hunts, and perhaps even chariot races. The Palmyrenes may have crafted a unique society, and they may have nurtured Near Eastern practices of varied origins. But they were still Roman imperial subjects. Zenobia perhaps witnessed Roman blood sport in her city.

A few decades before Zenobia's birth, key shifts in Roman governance reshaped Palmyra's civic life. In 212, the Antonine Constitution conferred Roman citizenship on most *peregrini* (noncitizen subjects). Many Palmyrenes, being enfranchised citizens, adopted Roman *tria nomina*. They now bore the names Iulius Aurelius, combined with a Palmyrene personal name. Inscriptions made as early as 213 bear witness to it. The name Aurelius was typical for new citizens. It was the gentilic of the emperor Caracalla. But the adoption of Iulius was unique. Palmyrenes were naming themselves after Caracalla's mother, Iulia Domna, a native of neighboring Emesa.⁵³ Regional pride informed this pattern. Zenobia probably had the name Iulia Aurelia while young.

This pattern highlights a vital aspect of Palmyrene society. Zenobia and her Palmyrenes were Romans. But when they conveyed their Romanness, they did so in distinctly Near Eastern ways. When they named themselves after Iulia Domna, Palmyrenes were couching their Romanness in an Arabian tradition. Among Bedouin, women are largely isolated from public life. But they can assume political leadership and jural authority when necessary.⁵⁴ We will witness how this Arabian tradition empowered Zenobia's rule over Palmyra. But it explains how Palmyrenes placed value on the gentilic of their emperor's mother. Palmyra's Arabian traditions led them to express their stature as Romans in unique fashion.

Shortly after issuing the Antonine Constitution, Caracalla gave Palmyra the status of *colonia*.⁵⁵ Traditional *coloniae* were settlements of Roman veterans and Italians that emperors placed in the provinces. In

⁵² Hammad (2008).

⁵³ Schlumberger (1942–1943b); Southern (2008) 4; Simelon (2013) 198–200; Hartmann (2016) 54–56. *IGLS* 17.1.157, 191–92, 299 (?) honor Iulia Domna.

⁵⁴ Lancaster (1997) 58–73; Finlayson (2008) 112, (2014) 247.

⁵⁵ *Digest* 50.15.1; *IGLS* 17.1.61, 67, 69, [224], [229]. Hartmann (2016) 55–65; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 61–62 treat significance.

Roman Syria, these were still being established during Zenobia's lifetime. But starting with Septimius Severus (193–211), emperors simply recognized some cities in Syria as *coloniae*.⁵⁶ The status imparted Roman citizenship and access to arbitration under Roman law. The Palmyrenes already had these through the Antonine Constitution. But the grant had immense cultural significance. It meant that Roman authorities deemed Palmyra to be as Roman a collective as those of Italy.⁵⁷ As usual, the Palmyrenes celebrated their city's Roman stature in uniquely Near Eastern ways. Emulating the city-states of Italy, they named many of their municipal offices after theirs. But they used Greek translations of the Latin names, even in Palmyrenean. Palmyra's chief annual magistrates became *strategoi*'*ṣṛṭg*' (Greek for *duumviri*).⁵⁸ Its new aediles (magistrates concerned with various public affairs and trade) were called by the name *agoronomos* (*rb šwq*).⁵⁹

During her lifetime, Zenobia navigated Palmyra's civic matrix and its anchorage in the Roman world. Zenobia's father was probably a recent tribal elite and civic councilor. Her husband Odainath certainly enjoyed such stature. He became a Roman senator and *vir consularis*, too. Zenobia was a Roman citizen, and she bore the name Iulia Aurelia throughout her youth. We will learn how Zenobia and her son earned honorific inscriptions and statues for their conspicuous deeds. But now we must reflect on the economy of Palmyra.

Economy and Trade

In 144 CE, a Palmyrene caravan honored an elite figure named Šo'adu, son of Boliada⁶⁰ with four bronze statues and bilingual inscriptions. These were raised at Palmyra's four "tribal" sanctuaries: the temples for Allat, Arsu, and Atargatis and "the sacred grove." One inscription has survived. It tells a tale of patriotism, risk, and violence. A key passage states:⁶¹

⁵⁶ Millar (1990), also in (2006); Dąbrowa (2004, 2012).

⁵⁷ Andrade (2015).

⁵⁸ *IGLS* 17.53, 61, 65, 67, 75, 224.

⁵⁹ Hartmann (2016) 55; Smith (2013) 131–32.

⁶⁰ Andrade (2012); Gregoratti (2015), (2016a); Sommer (2016a) 11, (2017) 136.

⁶¹ *IGLS* 17.1.127. This translation, with notes and references, is at Andrade (2012) 81–82. Drijvers (1995a) 34–38 also provides text, translation, and commentary. Kaizer (2002) 62–63, (2008) 654–55 (tribal sanctuaries).

Greek: . . . Taking a large force with him, he (Soados) advanced conspicuously and opposed [Ab]dallathos, from Eeithe, and those who had been assembled by him . . .

Palmyrenean: . . . (Šo'adu) went out with knowledge [and brought with him] a large force and stood against Abdallat Eheitei and the bandits that he had gathered . . .

These honors were not isolated. In 132, a caravan had praised Šo'adu for supporting caravans, merchants, and Palmyrenes living in Vologasias, a city in lower Mesopotamia.⁶² But he earned honors from the civic council too. Shortly after he had dealt with the brigand Abdallat, it raised statues and inscriptions for him in Palmyra, Vologasias, and Charax Spasinou (on the Persian Gulf), and at a caravan station outside Palmyra (called *Gennē*).⁶³ From these inscriptions, we learn that Roman governors of Syria praised Šo'adu for protecting Palmyrene caravans in letters. A member of Palmyra's military elite, he had apparently become a charismatic dynast on the eastern frontier.⁶⁴

Šo'adu's career shows how enmeshed Palmyra's caravan trade and its civic fabric were. We have already learned how the council, tribes, and kinsmen honored Palmyrenes for conspicuous deeds. At Palmyra, grateful caravans honored him too. Palmyrene notables, especially tribal elites, sometimes organized caravans under the title of "caravan leader" (Greek: *synodiarchēs*; Palmyrenean: *rb šyrt'* or *rš šyrt'*). Or with their military prowess they assembled the armed bands that protected them.⁶⁵ Šo'adu was one such figure, and Palmyrenes valued his deeds. Caravans sustained the economic life of the city. So Palmyrenes deemed caravan security a vital civic matter. We will learn how Odainath and Zenobia protected the caravan trade to their political advantage.

Zenobia's Palmyra is famous for its commerce with the Indian Ocean world. But it also benefited from its vast rural hinterland. Landowning at Palmyra is poorly documented. The municipal government presumably controlled vast estates in the countryside. So did Palmyra's tribal elites. They surely charged tax and rent for using their salt, irrigation water,

⁶² *IGLS* 17.1.150.

⁶³ Milik (1972) 13 (= *PAT* 1062, *SEG* 7.135); Seland (2016) 46.

⁶⁴ Gregoratti (2015), (2016a); Sommer (2016a) 11.

⁶⁵ For examples, see *IGLS* 17.1.22, 25, 67, 74, 87–89, 222, 242, 244, 247, 249, 313; Seland (2016) 71–74.

pasture, or farmland.⁶⁶ Otherwise, certain peasants owned smaller plots. The countryside teemed with herds, flocks, and people who practiced animal husbandry. They produced cereals too. The hinterland of Zenobia's Palmyra created immense wealth.

We know much about the local economy from the Palmyrene Tax Law.⁶⁷ It survives as a Greek and Palmyrenean inscription. The civic council raised it in 137 at the temple of Rab'asire.⁶⁸ The law was written to resolve disputes between merchants and tax collectors, who often relied on oral customs. It focused on taxes for local imports and exports. Transit commodities from the East were apparently exempt, even if the Roman state took its cut.

The Tax Law stresses the importance of Palmyra's water sources. These were the property of the Roman emperor. But the municipal government taxed irrigation rights to the Efqa spring and other water sources. In the countryside, it controlled such sources with forts.⁶⁹ Other items like salt were taxed.⁷⁰ So were imported and exported slaves, dyed wool, fragrant oil, olive oil, fat, salted fish, wheat and grains, wine, camels, sheep, and sacrificial animals.⁷¹ Taxes were assessed by wagon, camel, or donkey loads. Goods moving between Palmyra and its hinterland were not taxed.⁷² Pastoralists who visited presumably paid for grazing rights. Residents did not.⁷³

In the hinterland, animal husbandry and pastoralism were vital. Some inscriptions, in Palmyrenean and Safaitic (a kind of preclassical Arabic), refer to pastoralists in southeast of Palmyra.⁷⁴ Safaitic inscriptions from south Syria and north Jordan document how their authors made trips to Palmyra for watering, grazing, or raiding.⁷⁵ Rural Palmyrenes could grow food too. In medieval and modern times, the valleys of Palmyra's hinterland have enjoyed fleeting springs, streams,

⁶⁶ Smith (2013) 2–7, 49–53 informs present discussion.

⁶⁷ Text, translations, and commentaries: Matthews (1984); Healey (2009) 164–205; Shifman (2014) 97–220. Smith (2013) 49–53, 69–75 discusses and informs what follows too.

⁶⁸ *PTL* i.1–13 (Greek); i.1–13 (Palmyrenean). Gawlikowski (2012a), (2013).

⁶⁹ Schlumberger (1951); Crouch (1975b); Juchniewicz and Żuchowska (2012); Hauser (2012) esp. 218–22 (control). *PTL* iib.58 (Palmyrenean).

⁷⁰ *PTL* iiic.116–20 (Greek); iib. 72–73, iic.130–37 (Palmyrenean); Mior (2014) 95–106.

⁷¹ *PTL* iia-c (Palmyrenean); iiia-ivb (Greek) generally. For the *gad* (spirit) of olives, or olive merchants, Kaizer (1997) 162–63, (1998) 58, with *RTP* 131–32 (=PAT 2137–38).

⁷² *PTL* iva.189–91 (Greek), iic.112–13 (Palmyrenean); Smith (2013) 73.

⁷³ Smith (2013) 73.

⁷⁴ *PAT* 2732–2742; Safar (1964). Smith (2013) 51–53, 70–73.

⁷⁵ Meyer (2016) 94–96. For inscriptions, see MacDonald et al. (2017a) 540, 913, 1537, 1979, 1986, 5476, 6225, 7551.

and green summer grasses during the rainier seasons. Farmers have grown grain. Some have nourished gardens of palm and olive trees.⁷⁶ But the local vegetation has transformed over the last century.⁷⁷ The region was wetter in antiquity,⁷⁸ and the vegetation greater. Terebinths, oak, barberry, almond trees, fig trees, and various wild grains could be found. The terebinths made oil and charcoal available.⁷⁹

But the Palmyrenes did not rely solely on natural water. They also employed irrigation. Rural surveys have noted the many wells, cisterns, and catchment-arms that collected or distributed water.⁸⁰ The density of the villages and water sources suggests stable agriculture.⁸¹ Farmers and pastoralists were growing grains and cereals along streams, salt flats, and natural pools,⁸² as pollen samples suggest.⁸³ So “harvesters” did their work 200 kilometers to Palmyra’s southeast.⁸⁴ Olives and grapes in large numbers would have required more rainfall, even if gardens perhaps produced some olive trees. Inscriptions from the northwest hinterland and Palmyra itself celebrate the *Gad* (Fortune) of villages (*qryt*) or gardens (*gny*).⁸⁵ Olives and dates were presumably grown in these. We can envision farmers, shepherds, and nomads who plied their trades and interacted. They communicated in Palmyrenean or Safaitic Arabic.⁸⁶

The Palmyrenes’ irrigation and farming were noticed in antiquity. Fairly misinformed, Pliny believed that Palmyra’s hinterland sported fertile soil and healthful water.⁸⁷ Josephus, from Judea, even claimed that the Hebrew king Solomon founded Palmyra because of its springs and wells.⁸⁸ Despite the ecological constraints, Palmyra’s vast hinterland produced abundant wealth. Zenobia would control much of it, first as landowner and then as dynast.

⁷⁶ Tlass (2000) 22–23; Grant (1938) 12–13; Musil (1928b) 88, 136–37, 149; Schlumberger (1951) 4; Genequand (2012) 13–14, 151–59.

⁷⁷ Genequand (2012) 13.

⁷⁸ Mior (2014) 13.

⁷⁹ For water and ecology, Hammad (2013), Genequand (2012) 13–16. I learned of terebinths from Meyer, “Bride” (see p. 21, n. 6).

⁸⁰ Meyer (2009), (2011), (2013), (2017); Schlumberger (1951) 10–11; Mior (2014) 107–46; Juchniewicz and Zuchowska (2012).

⁸¹ Meyer (2013), with (2009), (2011); Mior (2014) 147–74.

⁸² Smith (2013) 72; Meyer (2016) 90–91;

⁸³ Krzywinski and Krzywinski (2016).

⁸⁴ *PAT* 2730; Smith (2013) 72.

⁸⁵ Schlumberger (1951) 157–58 (= *PAT* 1707); *PAT* 1621.

⁸⁶ Schlumberger (1951) 143–176, *PAT* 1663–747; Meyer (2016), esp. 92–96.

⁸⁷ Pliny, *NH* 5.88. Meyer, “Bride” (see p. 21, n. 6).

⁸⁸ Josephus, *AJ* 8.153–54.

Palmyra is famed for its caravan trade, as verified by inscriptions, silks, and dyed textiles discovered at Palmyra. We have already encountered one remarkable contributor. This was Šo'adu, son of Boliada. During the 130s and 140s, grateful caravans and the civic council honored him with statues at Palmyra, its hinterland, and its settlements on the Persian Gulf. Their inscriptions celebrated Šo'adu's great deeds, which included defending a caravan from a notorious bandit. In Vologasias, where he exerted the power of a charismatic dynast, he even established a temple for the Roman Augusti. It was necessary. Palmyrenes had settled in Vologasias, Phorat, and Spasinou Charax. Rome's ally Mesene controlled them until 150. So Palmyrenes in Mesene served as magistrates on Bahrain or sent embassies to Susa in Iran.⁸⁹

In the late 150s, Markos Oulpios Iarhai was also conspicuous. Grateful caravans and clients celebrated his support with numerous statues. His family was prominent. His brother Abgar was a military leader. His son Abgar led a caravan in 159.⁹⁰ Iarhai himself provided protection for caravans and merchants.⁹¹ One damaged bilingual inscription from 157 reads as follows:

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| Greek: | Markos Oulpios Iaraios, son of Hairan, son of Abgar, patriotic, the merchants who returned from Scythia in the ship of Honainos, son of Haddoudanes (honor). He aided and abetted them with [every] eagerness. In his honor, the month Dystros, the year 468. |
| Palmyrenean: | This is the statue of [Marqus Ulpius Iarhai, son of Hairan, son of Abgar], which [the merchants] raised. . . Honainu, son [of Haddudan] . . . in his honor, in [the month Adar, the year 468]. ⁹² |

Scythia here refers to the Indus River Valley. It was so named because the Sakas ("Scythians") had ruled it before the Indo-Parthians and

⁸⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.23, 25, 160; 227, 241–43, 245–47, 249; *PAT* 1584. Also *IGLS* 17.1.24 (Seleucia on the Tigris), 248 (Babylonia). Young (2001) 145–47.

⁹⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.201, 209, 251. This figure had a grandfather, brother, and son named Abgar.

⁹¹ *IGLS* 17.1.248–50, 255–56; *PAT* 1411. *IGLS* 17.1.202; Iarhai was connected to Palmyra's dromedary unit.

⁹² *IGLS* 17.1.250, with 26.

Kushans arrived.⁹³ But it was there that Palmyrenes acquired precious commodities for Mediterranean markets. These included silk and indigo.⁹⁴

Trade routes in preindustrial Syria were relatively consistent for thousands of years. They extended east across various parts of the dry steppe and then south along the Euphrates. But the movement of caravans along them peaked during the Roman period and the 18th century CE.⁹⁵ Camels made such activity possible.⁹⁶ Recent scholarship has shed light on Palmyra's trade.⁹⁷ In the spring, after nomads brought camels north to Palmyra, caravans of merchants, husbandmen, and soldiers departed from caravan stations at *Gennē* (22 kilometers southeast of Palmyra),⁹⁸ just north of the city,⁹⁹ or elsewhere. Laden with commodities, they followed camel tracks toward the Euphrates, with stops at springs and cisterns. At Hit, rafts made of inflated animal skins carried cargo down the Euphrates River. They reached sites near the Persian Gulf, like Vologasias, Phorat, and Charax Spasinou, where Palmyrene settlers lived.¹⁰⁰ From there, Palmyrene merchants and sailors took their goods to the port at Apologos. Sailing to north India or Arabia, they returned to Mesene with commodities like silk, pepper, and incense. Caravans then transported these goods to Palmyra or its hinterland. Such products arrived in the Mediterranean in autumn. Meanwhile, Roman tax officials claimed one-fourth of their value.

By Zenobia's time, Palmyra's overseas commerce faced serious challenges. The Parthians subdued the kingdom of Mesene in the early 150s. Thereafter, the Roman Empire waged serious wars with Parthia and Sasanian Persia. The Persians even destroyed Palmyra's border forts on the Euphrates in the 250s. Palmyrene caravan inscriptions disappeared during the 160s–190s, only to appear sporadically thereafter.¹⁰¹ Palmyrenes were also relocating to Red Sea Egypt, from which they could sail to India. While probably traveling from Egypt for some

⁹³ *PME* 38–39; Seland (2016) 39.

⁹⁴ *PME* 39: "Seric" pelts, cloth, and yarn and "Indian" dye.

⁹⁵ Carruthers (1929) for the 18th century, with Grant (1938) and Seland (2016) for caravan routes throughout history.

⁹⁶ Seland (2015b); Mandaville (2011) 87–88.

⁹⁷ My discussion synthesizes Seland (2011), (2014), (2015a), (2015b), (2016), esp. 23–24, 45–52; Hammad (2013); Young (2001) 123–69; McLaughlin (2010) 83–111; Gorea (2012b).

⁹⁸ See p. 44, n. 63; Seland (2016) 46.

⁹⁹ Hammad (2010) 145–50, (2013) 137; Delplace (2017) 132–40.

¹⁰⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.23, 25, 160; 227, 241–43, 245–47, 249; *PAT* 1584.

¹⁰¹ Young (2001) 147, 166, 173–75.

purpose, one Palmyrene left a wondrous wooden tablet in a grotto on Socotra, an island south of Arabia.¹⁰² Palmyrene activity in Red Sea Egypt was vibrant. So some have surmised that by Zenobia's lifetime, the caravan trade had regressed.¹⁰³

But Palmyrene caravan trade did not stagnate entirely.¹⁰⁴ Warfare brought serious disruptions. But nothing indicates that the Parthians and Sasanians sought to eradicate Palmyrene trade. In peacetime, they probably just taxed Palmyrene merchants who moved goods through their territory. Meanwhile, the Palmyrenes adjusted. They probably devoted more resources to new routes, negotiations with nomads, overseas tariffs, and defense, not bronze statues and inscriptions. Meanwhile, the Palmyrenes who relocated to Egypt were pursuing opportunities; they were not fleeing economic collapse. Some were soldiers stationed there.¹⁰⁵ Others were descendants or opportunistic newcomers. They perhaps even coordinated with compatriots working the traditional routes.¹⁰⁶ Despite becoming increasingly sporadic, caravan inscriptions show that trade continued until Zenobia's lifetime.¹⁰⁷ We will explore how Odainath and Zenobia amassed authority at Palmyra by protecting it. Third-century Palmyra was wealthy, and trade played a key role.

Palmyra's trade contacts with the Persian Gulf even had an impact on Manichaeism, a religion that took shape in Sasanian Persia in the 3rd century.¹⁰⁸ A ship captain with the Palmyrene name Oggias ('g') transported its founder Mani from Phorat to India.¹⁰⁹ Mani and his followers also may have written their Aramaic treatises in a script derived from Palmyrenean cursive. It was available near the Persian Gulf because 3rd-century Palmyrenes were still active there.¹¹⁰ This script also appears in the wooden tablet from Socotra that we have just encountered.

Such were the economy and commerce of Zenobia's Palmyra. We will return to how they shaped her life. But Palmyra's riches did not

¹⁰² Gorea (2012a).

¹⁰³ McLaughlin (2010) 103–6; Southern (2008) 42; Smith (2013) 79–80, 176–77.

¹⁰⁴ Gregoratti (2010) 35–36; Gawlikowski (2016b); Young (2001) 146–47, 166; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 142–43.

¹⁰⁵ Bernand (1984) nos. 39 (=PAT 0256), 85, and 103; Dijkstra and Verhoogt (1999) 208–10, with 213–18.

¹⁰⁶ Gorea (2012b) 482.

¹⁰⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.67, 74, 89.

¹⁰⁸ See pp. 187–88, nn. 157–60.

¹⁰⁹ *CMC* 144–45; Tubach (1995) 165–69.

¹¹⁰ Pederson and Larsen (2013) 3–5, 113–85 (esp. 132–37, 164); Moriggi (2014) 14–18.

reside merely in its land, products, and money. It had a wealth of languages and cultures that shaped Zenobia's existence.

Languages, Cults, and Cultures

Zenobia's Palmyra was a city of diverse languages. Many Palmyrenes spoke several languages, shifting among them in different social contexts. But their spoken conversations elude us. Their writings determine what we know. They also enable us to critique the *Historia Augusta*. In one passage, it describes Zenobia's knowledge of languages:

She (Zenobia) had commanded her sons to speak Latin, so they spoke Greek either with difficulty or occasionally. She herself was not entirely practiced in Latin, so she spoke it while bound by modesty. She also spoke Egyptian to perfection. She was so learned in Alexandrian and eastern history that she reportedly composed an abridgement of it. She, however, read in Greek the history written in Latin.¹¹¹

In another passage, it discusses a (fabricated) letter that Zenobia had allegedly sent to Aurelian:

Nicomachus says that that he translated this letter into Greek from the Syrian language, as dictated by Zenobia herself. For Aurelian's previous letter was sent in Greek.¹¹²

In these passages, the *Historia Augusta* indicates that "Syrian" was Zenobia's native language. It claims that she had a command of Greek too. Her Latin was weaker, but she made sure that her children could converse in it. We have, however, learned that the *Historia Augusta* is notoriously unreliable. To assess its statements, we must reflect on the evidence at Palmyra.

In Zenobia's Palmyra, most people spoke Palmyrenean Aramaic as their native language. If literate, they wrote and read it too. The language dominates Palmyrene inscriptions. Greek and Roman authors describe Palmyrenean, like most Aramaic dialects, as "Syrian." The *Historia*

¹¹¹ HA TT 30.20–22; BNJ 626.

¹¹² HA Aur. 27.6. On "Nicomachus," see p. 98, nn. 35–36.

Augusta is actually correct about Zenobia's native "Syrian" speech. Palmyrenean was Zenobia's native tongue.

A certain number of Zenobia's Palmyrenes knew Greek. It appears most often on honorary statues and civic decrees. Religious dedications and foundation inscriptions for tombs featured it too. But inscriptions in tombs were only seldom in the language. Greek also rarely appears in isolation. It usually accompanied Palmyrenean in bilingual texts. It is easy to understand why Palmyrenes learned it: It was the dominant language of the eastern Roman Empire and of Syria's Greek elites. Wealthy and powerful Roman elites often spoke it too. So knowing Greek afforded Palmyra's elites with political, social, and economic opportunities. They often learned it through formal tutoring.¹¹³ The *Historia Augusta* implies that Zenobia could speak and read Greek. It is probably right.

In Zenobia's Palmyra, people sometimes mastered Latin.¹¹⁴ Those who did often served in the Roman imperial administration or befriended Roman magistrates. Others learned it in the army. Moments ago, we learned how Zenobia was reportedly not fluent in Latin but insisted that her children study it. This is plausible. We will learn how she probably studied Palmyrenean and Greek in her youth. But once married to Odainath, it made sense to have her children master Latin. Zenobia may have learned it then too. She presumably spoke it when exiled in Italy. But she did not know it during her younger years at Palmyra, as her children would.

Some residents of Zenobia's Palmyra and its hinterland probably spoke an Arabic dialect. Safaitic inscriptions have been found in the hinterland, alongside Palmyrenean inscriptions.¹¹⁵ A famous relief of Baal-Shamin bears graffiti in Palmyrenean, Greek, and Safaitic.¹¹⁶ Nomadic pastoralists from north Arabia made some. But we have seen how settled Palmyrenes also maintained vibrant relationships with nomads. From them they received camels, caravan protection (or lack of raiding), commercial opportunities, and even kinship. In some instances, there was conflict.¹¹⁷ Many Palmyrene personal names and

¹¹³ Taylor (2002) 319 stresses the absence of Aramaic intrusions. For inscriptions, p. 9, nn. 28–29 and p. 63, n. 22.

¹¹⁴ al-As'ad and Delplace (2001); Hutton and Bonesho (2015); Yon (2001) 24–25, 250–51.

¹¹⁵ See p. 68, nn. 67–71.

¹¹⁶ Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) no. 153 (=PAT 2794–99); MacDonald et al. (2017b) 84.

¹¹⁷ Meyer (2016); Seland (2015b). MacDonald et al. (2017a) 540, 913, 1537, 1979, 1986, 5476, 6225, 7551.

loan words are Arabic in origin. The Palmyrenes maintained diplomatic and commercial connections with south Arabian kingdoms.¹¹⁸ So some Palmyrenes spoke Arabic from childhood or learned it. We have learned how Zenobia knew that her son's name Wahballath meant "gift of Allat" in preclassical Arabic.

Zenobia's Palmyra and its hinterland enjoyed a vibrant multilingualism. Zenobia did too. We will return to her alleged mastery of Egyptian later. But Palmyrenean was her native language. She had learned Greek. She perhaps learned Latin. But many social categories were alive at Zenobia's Palmyra too. These shaped her sense of self.

Civic and Ethnic Identities

Zenobia's Palmyra was a city in which Aramaean and Arabian traditions loomed large. The impact of Greek settlement in Syria and Roman imperialism was profoundly felt too. Social connections from Mesopotamia and Iran were also factors. So we must wonder how Zenobia conceived of herself. In its "life" of Zenobia, the *Historia Augusta* feigns an answer:

Now all sense of shame was squandered. For as the state faltered, it came to the point that even women, and foreigners (*peregrinae*) at that, governed excellently while Gallienus behaved worthlessly. In fact, a foreigner (*peregrina*) named Zenobia . . . governed longer than her womanly sex allowed.¹¹⁹

Here the *Historia Augusta* is dead wrong. Zenobia was not a *peregrina* by civil status. She also was not a foreigner. She was a Roman citizen and so much else.

The Palmyrenes had a dynamic and diverse cultural life. Their social universe was structured by many different relationships, interactions, and modes of organization. We have witnessed how this is so. Amid all of these, the Palmyrenes maintained many different social identities. Some were civic by nature; others were structured by kinship and ethnicity. We must comprehend how Palmyrenes conceived of themselves. Then we can know how Zenobia did too.

¹¹⁸ Arbach (2009); Robin (2012); Schiettecatte and Arbach (2016) 184–85; Sommer (2017) 166. Maraqtan (1995); Taylor (2002) 318: Arabic names and loans.

¹¹⁹ *HA TT* 30.1–2.

Zenobia belonged to a household, clan, and tribe at Palmyra. These were social categories that the Aramaeans and Arabians had brought. We have already learned how significant they were. Later (in Chapter 4), we will contemplate their impact on Zenobia. But many of Zenobia's social identities were shaped by Palmyrene civic life.

Zenobia was Palmyrene. As a member of Palmyra's civic community, Zenobia sought to amplify her city's prestige. She also endeavored to bring honor to her household, clan, and tribe. Even if gender limited her options, she still competed for honor before a Palmyrene civic audience, like other elites. We have witnessed how Zenobia's Palmyrenes protected caravans or built sanctuaries for their civic community. Palmyrene civic identity was deeply embedded in Zenobia's lived experience. As a Roman empress, she would promote her own city.

Zenobia was also a Syrian. All inhabitants of Roman Syria and its provinces were. In Roman times, Syrian was foremost a regional identity, even if some conceived of themselves as Syrian (or Aramaean, as rendered in Aramaic) by ethnicity too.¹²⁰ When Syria's inhabitants were abroad elsewhere in the empire, they called themselves Syrian.¹²¹ Syrians came in many shapes. Many spoke Greek, others Aramaic. Some knew Latin. They variously worshipped the different gods who inhabited Syria. In the north, these were Hittite-Luwian or Aramaean.¹²² In the south, they were Arabian. In Phoenicia and Palestine, they were Canaanite. But amid such diversity, Syria's provincial inhabitants had a common point of orientation. They were Syrian. Palmyrenes were too. This is why Zenobia's sources often referred to her as one.

Palmyrenes were also Greeks. Palmyra was deemed a Greek collective by Roman authorities. Greek elites in Syria recognized it as such too, if perhaps warily.¹²³ So Palmyrenes sampled from the cultural life of Greek city-states. Palmyrene elites wrote and spoke Greek. They adorned their homes with Greek-themed mosaics. They wore Greek mantles (*himatia*) as they engaged in Palmyra's civic practices.¹²⁴ The Palmyrenes built colonnaded streets and temples with certain Greek architectural features.¹²⁵ They made civic benefactions that emulated

¹²⁰ Andrade (2013, 2014).

¹²¹ Solin (1983); Noy (2000) 234–45, 318–21.

¹²² Blömer, Facella, and Winter (2009); Blömer (2014); Lightfoot (2003); Kaizer (2008c); Blömer, Lichtenberger, and Raja (2015).

¹²³ Sartre (1996); Andrade (2012, 2013) 171–201; Smith (2013) 122–30.

¹²⁴ See pp. 90–91, 96, nn. 2–5, 24–25.

¹²⁵ See pp. 26–27, 87, nn. 46–49, 200–1.

those of the contemporary Greeks. They were honored with statues and inscriptions, also a Greek convention. Palmyrenes may have been Aramaean and Arabian by origin. Their religious and cultural life could be determined by clans, tribes, and nomadic traditions. But they could still be Greek. So was Zenobia.

As we have witnessed, the *Historia Augusta* calls Zenobia a *peregrina*. In earlier periods, it referred to a noncitizen. Here it simply means “foreigner” or “barbarian.”¹²⁶ But Zenobia was Roman. By her lifetime, Palmyrenes were Roman citizens and often bore Roman *tria nomina* (Roman names often had three components). They worshipped the Roman emperor, served in the Roman military, and fulfilled equestrian posts. Zenobia’s husband Odainath became a Roman senator and *consularis*. He would govern the Syrian provinces as a Roman imperial magistrate. Zenobia would one day become Augusta. She would even govern her empire in the name of Roman authority, while fighting against the Roman imperial court.

We can also reckon Palmyra as part of a broader cultural “Parthian *koiné*,” or common heritage.¹²⁷ Its temple outlays were mirrored by those farther east. Its divine statues were too.¹²⁸ The Palmyrenes shared clothing styles with residents of Parthia and its client kingdoms.¹²⁹ Like so many people in Parthian territories, they spoke Aramaic. They worshipped the gods of Parthia’s Mesopotamian territories, like Nabu, Nergal, and Bel. But nothing indicates that they generally conceived of themselves as Parthian, Persian, or Iranian. Such cultural forms were simply embedded in Palmyrene life.

Zenobia embraced many Arabian customs, which had a huge impact at Palmyra. But she was not an Arab.¹³⁰ Arabians spoke various Arabic dialects and shared certain cultural practices in antiquity. But an Arab ethnic and national consciousness did not emerge until centuries after Zenobia lived.¹³¹ During the 3rd century, “Arabian” could have many different meanings. Greeks, Romans, and Syrians, and Mesopotamian peoples used it for nomads, who sometimes adopted it too.¹³² They also

¹²⁶ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 82.

¹²⁷ De Jong (2013); Gregoratti (2016b).

¹²⁸ See p. 87, nn. 199–205.

¹²⁹ Curtis (2017); Long (2017). See p. 96, nn. 23–25.

¹³⁰ Retsö (2003) 462–64; Sartre and Sartre (2016) 21–32, 219–38. For an “Arab” Zenobia, see pp. 226–27, nn. 74–81.

¹³¹ MacDonald (2009), esp. 293–310; Fisher (2011) 128–72; MacDonald et al., (2015) 11–89; Sartre and Sartre (2016) 23–32 inform what follows. For province of Arabia, Fiema et al. (2015) 373–433.

¹³² For example, *IHatra* 336, 343.

ascribed it to peoples of the Arabian peninsula, including sedentary ones. After the Romans created the province of Arabia in modern Jordan and north Saudi Arabia, its residents called themselves “Arabian,” in Greek or Latin.¹³³ The emperor known as Philip the Arab, from Shabwa, was an “Arabian” in provincial origin, not ethnicity. Zenobia would celebrate victories over nomads by bestowing the title *Arabicus* upon her son.¹³⁴ She would govern the “Arabians” of Roman Arabia. Later Greek and Jewish sources would describe her people as “Saracens.”¹³⁵ But despite her Arabian heritage, Zenobia was not an ethnic Arab. The concept had not been invented yet.

Zenobia embodied numerous identities in her lifetime. Sometimes these complemented one another; sometimes they were in tension. She was the member of a household, clan, and tribe. She was a Palmyrene. She was a Syrian, a Greek, and a Roman. Shaped by Arabian traditions and a Parthian cultural *koine*, she was not an Arab, Persian, or Parthian. But even so, Zenobia was a dynamic woman.

¹³³ MacDonald (2009) 301–3; Andrade (2013) 148–70.

¹³⁴ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 94–96, (2016) 25. See p. 191, n. 1.

¹³⁵ Malalas, 12.26–28, in Thurn (2000); TJ *Ter.* 8:10.46b. Retsö (2003) 463–65.

PART II

Embryonic Star

Social World

Zenobia was born in 240 or so.¹ She confronted danger from her first breaths of life. Ancient medicine offered little that deterred disease. Treatments for birthing complications were rudimentary. Rituals and objects reportedly offered protection, but babies died in droves anyway. Some Palmyrenes raised funerary portraits for lost children.² Infant skeletons tell a grim tale too. These were buried under the galleries or at the porches of tombs.³ The odds were good that Zenobia would not survive infancy or her first few years.⁴ But from the start, Zenobia was resilient and lucky. She lived.

By living, Zenobia had to navigate many life transitions, including menstruation, marriage, pregnancy, and widowhood. We may not know how she managed them, but we do know that these transitions occurred. The evidence from Palmyra sheds glimmers of light on elite Palmyrene women. By establishing their common experiences, we can paint a portrait of Zenobia's youth and maidenhood. In the chapters that follow, we trace how Zenobia experienced Palmyra at all stages of her life. But we offer due attention to her world before marriage, childbirth, and maturity (as Palmyrenes defined them).

¹ Zenobia's son Wahballath was still in minority in 268–272. If Zenobia was married in her late teens, she was born around 235–245 CE. Stoneman (1992) 111–12; Equini Schneider (1993) 32.

² See p. 64, nn. 27–32.

³ Higuchi and Saito (2001) 98–104, 146–47; Higuchi and Izumi (1994) 65, 107–16; Saito (2016) 117–26.

⁴ Laes (2011) 30–32, 50–56.

In 182 CE, a Palmyrene tribe honored a notable woman with a statue. Its base bore a Greek inscription:

Thomallachis, daughter of Haddoudanes, son of Iarhiboles,
son of Haddoudanes, son of Phirmon. Those from the tribe
of the Choneitai (made) in her honor because she generously
donated 2500 denarii for building the bath for the gods Aglibol
and Malakbel. The year 493, the month Loos.⁵

We know from inscriptions like this that Palmyrene women managed property and cash. They sometimes funded civic or religious buildings. We can assume that Zenobia did as well. Both the *Historia Augusta* and Zosimus comment on Zenobia's handling of money. They state:

Conferring benefactions with discretion, she (Zenobia)
preserved her treasury beyond the tendency for women.⁶

.....

She (Zenobia) was the wife of Odainath, but exercised the
judgment of a man.⁷

Both texts portray Zenobia as uniquely manly by giving undue credit to conventional stereotypes. She is seen as exercising a power that only men could handle. She also distributes money with a prudence that defies her gender (and Syrian origins). The *Historia Augusta* invokes this theme repeatedly, and Zosimus implies it. They mirror Roman legal thinking.⁸ But they still align with the Palmyrene sources in one key way. We know that Palmyrene women conferred benefactions with their wealth.⁹ Their generosity earned them honor among Palmyrenes. So Thomallachis donated 2500 denarii for sacred baths. She was not alone. Other Palmyrene women, Zenobia included, cultivated such generosity.

Throughout her life, Zenobia's access to wealth afforded her unique opportunities and constraints. Her elite stature gave rise to certain behaviors and attitudes. We have learned that some wealthy Palmyrenes

⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.312.

⁶ *HA TT* 30.16–17.

⁷ *Zos.* 1.39.2.

⁸ Grubbs (2002) 34–35, 37–43; Watson (1999) 85–87.

⁹ For examples, see Smith (2013) 97–98; Cussini (2005a) 28–29.

were merchants. They earned their riches through trade. But we have also contemplated how Palmyra's elites, empowered by their military acumen and clients, benefited from the labor of others. As we will see, they collected rents from farmers who worked their estates. They also charged pastoralists for grazing on their land. They invested in merchants and caravans and profited from them. In turn, they donated riches to their community. They served on the civic council. They forged relationships with Roman magistrates. They organized or protected caravans with their own resources. Such acts illustrated that they deserved their wealth and status. As an elite, Zenobia did not work. Others, including slaves, did it for her. She also consumed products that were unattainable by others. This made her unique.

Zenobia's womanhood had a huge impact on her life. Menstruation, pregnancy, and childbirth shaped her lived experiences in many ways. These stages of life were vital to how Palmyrenes defined Zenobia's role in their community. But men could scarcely fathom what it was like to go through them. In the Roman world, menstruation marked a woman's transition from child to maiden. Marriage and childbirth made her an adult.¹⁰ From the visual evidence, we can infer that Palmyrenes understood the life stages of women in similar ways. In funerary portraits, we encounter little girls who are only somewhat distinguishable from boys their age. We find maidens who have more gendered physical features, hair, and clothes. But most common are women with their hair covered. Their portraits represent them as married matrons.¹¹

Zenobia and other women acted out the social drama of gender in everyday life. This involved distinctions in education, pastimes, clothing, political participation, and so much else. As a Palmyrene child and then a maiden, Zenobia behaved in ways that distinguished her from boys and men, who had different behaviors, expectations, and obligations. But we will also learn how Zenobia and other Palmyrene women could engage in "manly" acts too. Let's place Zenobia in the spectrum of behaviors that distinguished elite women. We can add a new dimension to her likeness by doing so.

¹⁰ Harlow and Laurence (2002) 54–64.

¹¹ See p. 11, n. 41 for funerary portraits and gender. For children, see Pierson (1984); Krag and Raja (2016) 143. I thank Maura Heyn for her helpful conversation and her lecture on "Embodied Identities in the Funerary Portraiture of Palmyra," Metropolitan Museum, New York, May 23, 2016, now in Aruz (2018)

In 262 CE or so, a Palmyrene gave thanks to a sympathetic god with an altar. Its inscription stated:

Be'elai, his sons (*bnwhy*), and all the sons [of] his house (*bnyh [dy] byth klhn*) made in thanksgiving for the merciful, good, and compassionate one. He called to him, and he answered.
The year 574.¹²

The dedication gives insight into one of Palmyra's most vital social units: the household. It communicates the father's authority within it. It also conveys the status of his wife, children, slaves, and anyone else who lived with him. These were the "sons of his house" (with *bny* being gender inclusive). So we can glimpse the structure of the household in which Zenobia was raised.

The sources are silent about Zenobia's specific household. Even the identity of her father poses problems. We have learned that inscriptions identify Zenobia as "the daughter of Antiochus" (*bt 'ntywkw*s).¹³ But this could refer to a clan affiliation, not paternity. Sometimes at Palmyra *brt* denoted a daughter and *bt* a female descendent.¹⁴ So some posit that Zenobia claimed links to the Seleucid dynasty, in which the name Antiochus was popular.¹⁵ But this is not a universal rule. Some Palmyrenes used *bt* for daughters.¹⁶ Zenobia's father was named Antiochus. A notable figure named Iulius Aurelius Zenobios, also Zabdila, whom some tenuously treat as Zenobia's father (or identical to Antiochus), should be dismissed.¹⁷

We know little about Antiochus. But he was probably named Iulius Aurelius Antiochus. We have seen how his daughter was probably Iulia Aurelia Zenobia. In Palmyrenean, she was Bathzabbai, or "daughter of Zabbai." A native Aramaic speaker, Zenobia surely said and heard it more routinely than her more famous Greek name of Zenobia.

¹² PAT 0397.

¹³ PAT 0317; **Appendix 3**, 4c. While uncertain, a tessera in Paris may refer to "Bathzabbai" as daughter of Antiochus. Milik (1971) 318; Equini Schneider (1993) 26–27. **Appendix 3**, 5d.

¹⁴ Piersimoni (1995a) 255.

¹⁵ Stoneman (1992) 112.

¹⁶ PAT 0528–29, 540.

¹⁷ IGLS 17.1.53; Stoneman (1992) 2; Kotula (1997) 104; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 79–80. He was perhaps an ancestor. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 78–81.

Palmyrene women often had names denoting metaphorical daughterhood. But whether Zabbai refers to a remote ancestor is unclear.¹⁸

While obscure to us, Antiochus had a huge impact on Zenobia's identity within the Palmyrene community. We have witnessed how important patrilineal descent was at Palmyra. The most basic social unit of Palmyra was the household. Antiochus was the head of Zenobia's. His wife, children, slaves, and any extended family living with him were members of "his house" (*byth*). Zenobia and her siblings, being "children of the house" (*bny byt'*), belonged to "the house of their father" (*byt' bwhn*).¹⁹ Palmyrene sarcophagi lids and funerary reliefs often bear portraits of a household's core or "constellations" of key members,²⁰ and sometimes include extended family (Figs. 5.2–5.3). Burials in tombs were predominantly based on household relations (within or among them).²¹ Like all Palmyrenes, Zenobia identified herself by the name of her father and his patrilineal ancestors. She received her clan and tribal status from them as well.

The men of Antiochus's house presumably held obligations to Zenobia throughout their lives. These obligations persisted even after she married Odainath. At Palmyra, even married mothers were foremost identified as daughters in inscriptions.²² They could sometimes be identified as wives too. Even when buried in their husbands' tombs, they still were connected to their natal households. So likenesses of them often decorated their fathers' tombs and sarcophagi. We can assume that Antiochus was a person of some influence and wealth, however recent his household's prominence. The dynast Odainath would not have married his daughter otherwise.

We know almost nothing about Zenobia's mother. But if living, she played a vital role in Zenobia's world. She provided paradigms for gender practice. Zenobia also adopted various of her clothing styles. Most notable were perhaps headscarf styles (Fig. 5.3). But Zenobia

¹⁸ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 78–79; Equini Schneider (1993) 29–30.

¹⁹ PAT 0343, 355, 379, 382, 397, 400, 1437, 1666 for *byth*; Smith (2013) 87–88. PAT 0324 for *byt' bwhn*; PAT 0379, 382, 394, 397, 1435, 1445–46, 1448, 1452, 1666, 1900, 1911, 1920 for *bny byt'*. *Bny byt'* refers to household, not clan. Smith (2013) 87–88.

²⁰ Raja (2017a) 325–34, (2017b).

²¹ Various sarcophagi and reliefs are *SFP*; Tanabe (1986); Ingholt (1928, 1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1962, 1966, 1971); Finlayson (1998). For tombs and households, see Hauser (2016) 564–65; Yon (2001) 197–234.

²² The main corpora of Palmyrenean inscriptions are: *PAT*; *Inv.*; *CIS* 2.3; Gawlikowski (1974); Hvidberg-Hansen (1998); al-As'ad and Delplace (2001); al-As'ad and Gawlikowski (1997); Yon (2013); al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012).

did not inherit a single “tribal” style from her.²³ Funerary portraits for mothers and daughters, or even the same women, sometimes show them wearing different headscarf styles.²⁴ In truth, their styles probably varied. In portraits, children normally do not wear headscarves. But Zenobia surely wore them as a matron and perhaps as a maiden, too.

We wonder whether Zenobia shared bonds of affection with her parents. Some scholars surmise that people in antiquity did not have much affection for children.²⁵ Funerary sculptures at Palmyra certainly reflect the social and religious obligations that people sought to fulfill for others. Public statues and religious dedications do as well. But nothing precludes that these oftentimes reflect gestures of affection too.²⁶ So mothers and fathers (or jural guardians) commemorated their children, including daughters.²⁷ Children did the same for their mothers or fathers, sometimes along with their sisters, wives, brothers, or sons.²⁸ The notable named Hairan made a tomb for his parents, Bonne and Ba’alteg.²⁹ He was not alone.³⁰ Funerary stelai, portraits, and sarcophagi often depicted mothers and, to a lesser extent, fathers, with their children and even grandchildren.³¹ In some funerary portraits, women bear lacerated breasts and mourn for lost children.³² Unless her family was exceptional, bonds of parental affection were part of young Zenobia’s world.

We wonder whether Zenobia’s parents had affection for each other. Elite marriages often reflected political strategies. But Bedouin men seldom arrange marriages entirely against the will of daughters and sisters.³³ At Palmyra, sarcophagus reliefs, inscribed funerary portraits, and

²³ See Finlayson (1998) for headscarves and matrilineality.

²⁴ Ingholt (1928) 468, (1938) Pl. 47.2 (*CIS* 2.3.4421, Pl. 38, with photo=*PAT* 0781) depicts a mother/daughter pair who have different headscarves. Finlayson (1998) 1.223–45 identifies them as aunt and niece despite the inscription. See also p. 4, n. 16, and, n. 32 below; Raja (2015) 349.

²⁵ Sigismund-Nielsen (2007) discusses this topic.

²⁶ Laes (2011) 100–6.

²⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.30, 179, 181, 469; *PAT* 0482, 549, 839–40, 1364, 1767. Yon (2001) 167. Perhaps also *PAT* 857, Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg-Hansen (1998) nos. 27, 98–99.

²⁸ Various funerary portraits are in *SFP*; Ingholt (1928); Ploug (1995), with Hvidberg-Hansen (1998); Tanabe (1986); *CIS* 2.3 (plates); Starcky (1974); Ingholt (1928, (1934, 1935, 1936, 1938, 1962, 1966, 1971); Colledge (1976), Parlasca (1980, 1990, 2005); Meischner and Cussini (2003); Finlayson (1998); al-As’ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012). For inscriptions, see p. 9, nn. 28–30 and p. 63, n. 22.

²⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.535. Similarly, Yon (2013) no. 95, with Higuchi and Saito (2001) for tomb.

³⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.516, 531.

³¹ Krag and Raja (2016): 14% of loculus reliefs and 29% of stelae reliefs for women show children, only 4% and 3% for men (137). Examples: Heyn (2010) 646–53; Krag (2016) 181 (n. 12), 186.

³² Heyn (2010) 645–46. Ingholt (1928) 468 (= *CIS* 2.3.4421, Pl. 38=*PAT* 0781), on which above, n. 24; Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg Hansen (1998) no. 86 (= *PAT* 0723); Ingholt (1934) 40–42, Pl. 10.1.

³³ Lancaster (1997) 59–60.

honorific statues hint at affection. They surely reflect familial promotion, displays of harmony, or a sense of obligation too. The man who built a vast part of the Transversal Colonnade raised a statue for his wife Marthi.³⁴ In his brother's tomb, a sarcophagus lid rendered as a dining couch (*klinē*) portrays husband and wife. The wife is seated at the feet of her reclining husband.³⁵ Such representations typified sarcophagi.³⁶ They adorn the frescoes of banquet scenes that Palmyrenes made at Dura-Europos.³⁷ On one sarcophagus, a man named Bolbarak apparently had reliefs of his mother and his two wives made. His mother and one wife were seated at his head and feet as he reclined and dined. His other wife stood beside his seated wife.³⁸

Funerary portraits could sometimes depict husbands and wives together.³⁹ We also know of men who expected their wives to be buried in their tombs.⁴⁰ One man had a tomb and funerary likenesses made for himself and his wife.⁴¹ Another celebrated how his wife had honored his brother and their children on her funerary portrait.⁴² Women could celebrate their husbands too. One had her husband and her daughter depicted in his funerary likeness.⁴³ We ultimately know little about the relationship between Zenobia's parents. But they had social obligations to each other and to their children.

Zenobia's sources say nothing about siblings. But a couple probably lived during her childhood. Among the Bedouin, brothers and sisters share strong intimacies. Brothers are their sisters' protectors. They eventually assume their fathers' jural duties to them too. In turn, sisters often have maternal dispositions toward their brothers. They also cultivate certain perceptions of equity despite different gender expectations and life paths.⁴⁴ To a certain degree, these dispositions can be detected in

³⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.117. Similarly, Yon (2013) no. 27.

³⁵ *SFP* no. 232–38, Figs. 248–49, with *PAT* 0119–20=Sadurska (1979) and 1949, 1980 (same inscriptions, replicated twice).

³⁶ Refer to p. 63, nn. 20–21.

³⁷ *TEAD* 6, Pl. 42.1 (146–72), with 150–51.

³⁸ *SFP* no. 188, Fig. 157 (= *PAT* 1537), no. 190, Fig. 158 (= *PAT* 1536) no. 195, Fig. 247 (*PAT* 1526–35); Piersimoni (1995b) 2.593; Krag (2016) 189. Finlayson (1998) 1.407–9 interprets the second wife as a daughter.

³⁹ Krag and Raja (2016) 139, with no. 18, with Heyn (2010) 646–50; Krag (2016) 181, n. 12, 184.

⁴⁰ *PAT* 1787, 1897.

⁴¹ *PAT* 1812–13 (= *SFP* no. 184, Figs. 220–21). Also *SFP* no. 99, Fig. 142 (= *PAT* 1872).

⁴² *PAT* 0879=*CIS* 2.3.4518, Pl. 38. See Fig. 5.3.

⁴³ Ingholt (1928) 102 (= *CIS* 2.3.4516, Pl. 50=*PAT* 0877).

⁴⁴ Lancaster (1997) 60–61.

Palmyra's material culture.⁴⁵ One banquet relief displays a brother and sister who recline together.⁴⁶ Palmyrenes often had religious dedications or even tombs made for their brothers and sisters.⁴⁷ We have already seen in Chapter 3 how a woman named Amatallat did so.⁴⁸ Palmyrenes made funerary portraits for siblings too, as a certain Šegal did for her sister.⁴⁹ Brothers and sisters appear on sarcophagi⁵⁰ and funerary portraits.⁵¹ Their bonds are displayed by honorific statues, epitaphs, and religious offerings.⁵² These hint at Zenobia's relationship with her brothers and sisters, if living.

In her youth, Zenobia surely had extended family. She presumably had formal obligations to her father's relatives while forging close bonds with her mother's. This phenomenon is attested among Bedouin.⁵³ So Zenobia's compatriots could represent children with their maternal grandparents (or mention such grandparents) in funerary portraits.⁵⁴ They sometimes included maternal kin, like cousins, in their tombs.⁵⁵ But patrilineal descent defined ongoing jural obligations and relationships. Women sometimes even married paternal uncles or cousins.⁵⁶ We catch glimpses of relationships forged by paternal uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and cousins from religious offerings, epitaphs, and funerary portraits.⁵⁷ One portrait commemorates a pair of paternal

⁴⁵ Finlayson (2008) 112, (2014) 247.

⁴⁶ Charles-Gaffiot (2001) no. 255, Tanabe (1986) no. 424, with *PAT* 1802; Finlayson (2008) 112, (2014) 247. Also perhaps Schmidt-Colinet (1992) 73b. Krag (2016) 190–91 discusses this topic.

⁴⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.130, 319, 342, 345, 402, 461, 469, 471, 479, 513, 537, 541, 544; *PAT* 1130, 1787, 1898, 1902, 1904, 1906–1907, 1909, 1914, 1919. Hvidberg-Hansen (1998)/Ploug (1995) nos. 9 (= *PAT* 0354).

⁴⁸ *PAT* 0168.

⁴⁹ *PAT* 0915 = *CIS* 2.3.4554, Pl. 60. Also see Ingholt (1936) 96, Pl. 20.3, with Yon (2001) 166; *PAT* 1346 (= *Inv.* 8.200); Ingholt (1928) 183 (= *CIS* 2.3.4329, Pl. 54, *PAT* 0687); *PAT* 0364 (= *CIS* 2.3.4018), 0641 (= *CIS* 2.3.4284, Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) no. 172), 0657 (= *CIS* 2.3.4300), 0662 (= *CIS* 2.3.4205), 0688 (= *CIS* 2.3.4330, Pl. 36); 1435–36, 1447, 1455, 1551, 1559, 1618; al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012) 9a–b.

⁵⁰ Krag (2016) 187.

⁵¹ For examples, see Heyn (2010) 646–50; Krag (2016) 181, n. 12, 184–86, with al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012) nos. 11, 27, 53.

⁵² *IGLS* 17.1.257, 262, with 463–64, 479. *PAT* 0365, 0915, 1898, 1902, 1904, 1907, 1914.

⁵³ Lancaster (1997) 69. Smith (2013) 90 comments.

⁵⁴ Heyn (2010) 650; Meischner and Cusini (2003) 98–103, Fig. 3; *SFP* no. 96, Fig. 12 (*PAT* 1869).

⁵⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.445; Ingholt (1938) 104 (= *PAT* 0071), with perhaps *PAT* 0398. *PAT* 0562 (transfer of tomb niches to maternal cousins). *SFP* no. 120, Figs. 231–36 (*PAT* 1893), with nos. 95–121 (*PAT* 1867–95): the sarcophagus of Malku features a portrait of Tamma, perhaps a maternal cousin.

⁵⁶ See p. 107, nn. 97–98.

⁵⁷ *PAT* 0353, 418, 1614, 1909; *IGLS* 17.1.467, 537, 542; *PAT* 896, with Smith (2013) 89, Fig. 4.4; *SFP* no. 96, Fig. 12 (*PAT* 1869). For aunts/nieces, Krag (2016) 181, n. 12. Paternal cousins: *PAT* 1784, 1787, 1790, 2816; *IGLS* 17.1.449; Yon (2013) nos. 54–55.

cousins.⁵⁸ A man named Gaddarsu treasured a cult relief that his father's cousin had raised.⁵⁹ Another Palmyrene conceded half of his tomb to his father's cousin. He was apparently respecting his dead father's wishes.⁶⁰

Such testimonies enable us to glimpse young Zenobia's youthful experiences. So do their affinities with Bedouin customs and funerary portraits. Surrounded by relatives, Zenobia enjoyed many typical childhood expressions of affection from adults. But she also suffered the pangs of loss. Some cherished relatives surely died while she was young.⁶¹ At this time, Zenobia shared many experiences with boys her age. We have already seen how young children bear few distinct markers of gender in funerary portraits. By contrast, maidens have more womanly appearances. This suggests that gender roles and distinctions became more important as girls matured. So, not yet spending her day with women exclusively, Zenobia had adventures in common with her brothers, sisters, or cousins. They shared hopes, joys, and secrets. They played with terracotta horses, cows, and camels, or clay carts with wheels.⁶² They kept pets, like birds and dogs. They competed and bonded through *mancala*, a popular board game.⁶³ They probably learned Palmyrenean or Greek letters from alphabets (*abecedaria*) scratched into the walls of courtyards or rooms.⁶⁴ But even if she shared a world of play with boys her age, Zenobia's activities also began to school her in gender roles. She played with dolls made of textiles, or bone segments. She sampled earrings. She learned to spin and weave from women. She discovered how to communicate modesty through veil, voice, and gesture in an elaborate game of display and concealment.⁶⁵ Through her play and work, she learned what the behaviors of Palmyrene women were. But by knowing them, she also learned how to transgress.

In her early years, young Zenobia dwelled in her parents' house. One day marriage would bring her to another's. Let's contemplate the house in which young Zenobia lived. We can learn more about her social world by doing so.

⁵⁸ *SFP* no. 116, Fig. 104.

⁵⁹ *PAT* 1929 (= *RSP* 124).

⁶⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.423–24, with *PAT* 1817–37, *IGLS* 17.1.425–29.

⁶¹ Laes (2011) 28–29.

⁶² Baird (2014) 231–47, on Dura-Europos, and d'Ambra (2007) 59–62 inform what follows.

⁶³ De Voogt (2010).

⁶⁴ Baird (2014) 237–38; Sokolowski (2014) 394.

⁶⁵ Wilkinson (2015) provides the full picture.

Hundreds of kilometers southeast of Palmyra, written traces of life in Palmyra's hinterland have been found. They bear witness to agriculture and pastoralism. As one inscription states:

Remembered and blessed be these harvesters who were with
Abgar, son of Hairan, at the border here. Peace! . . .⁶⁶

Another declares:

In the month Adar, the [year 4]09, Zebida, son of
Haumal, camped during the generalship of . . . and pastured
here in Shaadai. Peace! . . .⁶⁷

In these inscriptions, we get a rare look at Palmyra's pastoralists. These could be residents of Palmyra's hinterland or nomads who visited intermittently. Harvesters raised the first. They testify to how opportunistic residents, pastoralists, or nomads could grow cereals at *wadi* beds or salt flats, where water was sometimes concentrated.⁶⁸ The second inscription points to pastoralists in Palmyra's hinterland. It also hints at a Palmyrene commander who regulated their activity. It is one of many inscriptions in Palmyrenean or Safaitic Arabic that pastoralists left in 98 CE.⁶⁹

While far from Palmyra, these inscriptions may have been in Palmyra's hinterland. It extended roughly 70 kilometers northwest and 60 southwest.⁷⁰ Southeast it may have stretched hundreds of kilometers to the Euphrates or maybe just to the modern Syrian-Iraqi border. But Palmyra at least controlled key resources, watering stations, and forts as far as the Euphrates.⁷¹ In these remote places, Palmyrene and nomad pastoralists were growing food and raising animals. We are unable to chart their life paths. But the inscriptions give vital glimpses of Palmyra's polyglot rural labor force and seasonal visitors.

⁶⁶ PAT 2730; Teixidor (1962) 63–64, (1963) 33–34; Smith (2013) 72.

⁶⁷ PAT 2732=Safar (1964) no. 1.

⁶⁸ Meyer (2016) 92–93, 96–100; Smith (2013) 72.

⁶⁹ PAT 2732–42; Safer (1964): Palmyrenean and Safaitic. Meyer (2016) 92–93; Smith (2013) 52 discuss.

⁷⁰ AE (1939) 179–80; Mior (2014) 1–2; Seland (2016) 15–19; Smith (2013) 3–4.

⁷¹ Key are PAT 2757, 2810–11; Yon (2013) no. 154. Meyer (2016) 92–93 discusses this matter. See also p. 40, n. 39.

At first glance, harvesters and shepherds have nothing to do with Zenobia. But this is not so. Their work shaped her existence. The Palmyrene Tax Law hints at how. It specifies that foodstuffs brought to market from Palmyrene villages would not be taxed. Neither would commodities transported from Palmyra to the rural hinterland.⁷² This implies that villagers raised crops and animals, a premise supported by recent field surveys.⁷³ Some villagers were free peasants, but others surely paid rent to landowners. Perhaps Palmyra's elites, who ran the civic council and organized the city's military defense, did not want to compromise their own revenues by overburdening rent-paying farmers. So they did not tax the hinterland's agrarian yield. It was enough that they were taxing imports and seasonal pastoralists. But amid their military activity and governance, Palmyra's elite profited from the labor of other Palmyrenes. Wealthy and propertied, Zenobia's family did too.

But like most such elites, Zenobia spent much time in urban Palmyra. In her youth, Zenobia's natal household presumably had a townhouse there. Since jural authority was largely paternal, the house probably belonged to Zenobia's father or his relatives. But it could have belonged to her mother's family too.⁷⁴ To the immediate south and east of Bel's sanctuary were residential areas. Others were located on both sides of the Great Colonnade's western half. Palmyra's houses have not been thoroughly studied, but exceptions are noteworthy.⁷⁵ Elite houses are sometimes classified as Greek in style. But their outlays were common in the houses and temples of the Near East.⁷⁶ Made mostly of mud-brick layers placed on top of limestone blocks, their rectangular courtyards were surrounded by various rooms. Some courtyards were bordered by columns. But the houses' outlays were not symmetrical. They could also have several such courtyards. We know much less about the housing of middling sorts. Presumably, their dwellings were modest. Nomads who pastured at Palmyra dwelled in goat-skin tents.⁷⁷

⁷² *PTL* iva.187–91 (Greek); iic.109–12 (Palmyrenean). Smith (2013) 49–53, 70–73 (esp. 73) informs this discussion.

⁷³ Meyer (2009, 2011, 2013, 2016, 2017).

⁷⁴ Smith (2013) 84–85 treats possible configurations and addresses the lack of evidence.

⁷⁵ Gawlikowski (2007b); Frézouls (1976); Smith (2013) 86; Delplace (2017) 142–56. For some recent work, see Żuchowska (2007); al-As'ad and Grassi (2013); Delplace (2013); Plattner (2013) 89–117; Ertel and Ployer (2013) 118–69, (2016).

⁷⁶ Downey (1988); Baird (2014).

⁷⁷ Strabo, 16.1.27; Mandaville (2011) 40–41.

The location of Zenobia's childhood house is unknown. It would have been large (up to 2000 square meters). We do not know whether her father's household occupied it alone. A single household presumably inhabited some courtyard houses. But some house complexes had multiple courtyards and entrances from different streets or alleys.⁷⁸ Extended families of several households could have dwelled in and around their own courtyards. Similar situations are documented at Dura-Europos.⁷⁹ Wealthy houses sometimes had two stories. Perhaps men and women dwelled in separate quarters or stories. Or they just occupied different parts at different times for various purposes.⁸⁰ As a young girl, such distinctions may not have affected Zenobia much. We have already witnessed how gender roles and distinctions probably became more important as girls matured.⁸¹ When she arrived at maidenhood, Zenobia presumably spent more time with the women of her household. She took greater part in their oversight of spinning and weaving. From them, she gathered knowledge of Palmyra's social life. But as a young girl, Zenobia probably cavorted with boys.

House courtyards were the scenes of many social and domestic activities. Extended family units convened there, even if households lived separately. The courtyards contained altars for the domestic gods that Zenobia worshipped. They or adjacent rooms housed ovens and braziers (barbecues) for cooking bread, meat, and other foods. Servants ground grain with hand mills or mortars.⁸² They also cooked and stored food in ceramic pots. These were made locally or were imported from Syria and Parthian Mesopotamia.⁸³ So Zenobia's childhood house had many ovens, spaces for food preparation, and places for dining.⁸⁴ The smells of baking bread and roasted animal flesh, especially sheep, goat, camel, and sometimes gazelle (or even wild donkeys), were familiar to her.⁸⁵ So were the scents of myrrh, balsam, and other perfumes,⁸⁶ especially when

⁷⁸ Gawlikowski (2007b) 89–91.

⁷⁹ Baird (2014) 50–55, with *P. Dura*. 19.

⁸⁰ Gawlikowski (2007b) 89–90; Baird (2014) 80–93, 214–15 (on Dura-Europos). For gendering of space among Bedouin, see Mandaville (2011) 40.

⁸¹ See p. 61, n. 11.

⁸² Ertel and Ployer (2013) 152–55; Gawlikowski (2007b) 90; Baird (2014) 67–69, 164–65, 175 (Dura-Europos).

⁸³ Römer-Strehl (2013a), (2016).

⁸⁴ Gawlikowski (2007b) 90.

⁸⁵ Forstenpointner and Weissengruber (2013) 261–67 discuss the remains of over 2000 animals from a house's filling layers. *PTL* iic.145 (Palmyrenean), iva.145–47 (Greek): imports of sheep. *TEAD* 6, Pl. 42.1 (146–72): onager hunt. For hunting in modern times, see Musil (1928b) 149; (1928a) 26–27.

⁸⁶ *PTL* iia.19–30 (Greek), iia.13–21 (Palmyrenean).

lit aflame on incense burners or dishes mounted on altars (Fig. 4.2–4.4).⁸⁷ Her household's bowls and plates were made of baked clay or of greenish-blue or colorless glass.⁸⁸ These too were Syrian or Mesopotamian, or sometimes of Palmyrene make.⁸⁹ If funerary sculptures provide any indication, members of Zenobia's household handled imported drinking cups and bowls made of gold, silver, or bronze for important social or religious events.⁹⁰ A host of oil lamps brought light. Most were made at Palmyra; some were imported.⁹¹

Zenobia's childhood home also had art. Interior rooms in elite houses sported floor mosaics made of small painted stones. Resembling others from north Syria, they celebrated Greek myths.⁹² One surviving scene, which also appears in a tomb painting, shows Achilles being discovered in women's clothing at the court of Lycomedes. This sealed his fateful trip to Troy.⁹³ Another features Poseidon and the Nereides casting judgment on Cassiopeia. She had claimed superior beauty and was transformed into a constellation as punishment.⁹⁴ Later we will encounter a mosaic that celebrates Odainath (Fig. 6.1–6.2). One panel features the myth of Bellerophon and Pegasus. Through comparisons with Zeugma and Dura-Europos, we can surmise various styles of wall paintings that displayed banquet or hunting scenes, images of Eros or Aphrodite, or illusionistic architecture made with brightly colored paint.⁹⁵ Zenobia was exposed to Greek mythic traditions through paintings like these.

We can make further inferences about the decorations of Zenobia's house. Recent finds from Palmyra help with this. Walls were ornamented with molded pilasters, stucco, and yellow, black, red, Egyptian blue, and green paints.⁹⁶ They sported popular patterns. These could include palmettos, "egg and dart" molding, and meanders.⁹⁷ Perhaps theater masks also were arranged in patterns.⁹⁸ Some walls had frescoes. These

⁸⁷ McLaughlin (2014) 29–30. Strabo, 16.2.41 (balsam), 16.4.25 (frankincense, myrrh, cassia).

⁸⁸ Gebel and Römer-Strehl (2013) 87–92; Ployer (2013) 127–205.

⁸⁹ Gawlikowska (2015).

⁹⁰ Miyashita (2016).

⁹¹ Römer-Strehl (2013b).

⁹² Balty (2014) 52.

⁹³ Balty (2014) 37–44 (with 29–50 generally); Colledge (1976) 85, Fig. 115; Sørensen (2016) 109–10.

⁹⁴ Balty (2014) 14–28.

⁹⁵ Tobin (2013), Bergmann (2013); Baird (2014) esp. 75–77, 243; *TEAD* 6, 146–72.

⁹⁶ Tober (2013), with 238–49 for synthesis. One can perhaps compare to Allag, Blanc, and Parlasca (2010). Also Colledge (1976) 105, Fig. 137.

⁹⁷ Tober (2013) 170–200; Allag, Blanc, and Parlasca (2010) 200–8.

⁹⁸ Tober (2013) 201–8; Allag, Blanc, and Parlasca (2010) 209–14.

could feature patterns of multicolored bands, medallions, or polygons.⁹⁹ Stucco or gypsum decorations were perhaps nailed to the ceilings or walls too. They could take the shape of horses, columns, octopi, mussels, or fish with gold leaf.¹⁰⁰ The specifics of Zenobia's house evade us. But her domestic world surely abounded with vibrant colors and shapes.

Like everyone else, Zenobia had to drink water. Palmyrenes faced challenges in getting it, but they exploited what they had. The Efqa spring was a mainstay, if not potable. The *wadis* brought periodic help. The Palmyrenes amplified their potency. An underground canal fed the grotto and basin where the Efqa spring surfaced. Palmyrenes could enjoy warm baths. Canals apparently distributed its water elsewhere.¹⁰¹ The Palmyrenes also created elaborate qanawat (underground tunnels) and aqueducts. Some of these extended for kilometers into the hinterland. Groundwater was tapped by wells. Cisterns collected the water that moved through Palmyra. They gathered rain runoff too. Underground piping moved water to baths, fountains, and perhaps in certain cases, houses. Each segment of the Great Colonnade, lined by underground pipes, had a fountain.¹⁰² The agora and major sanctuaries also had access to water by various devices.¹⁰³

Palmyra's irrigation earned acclaim. In the late 1st century, Josephus, from Palestine, noted the existence of springs and wells there.¹⁰⁴ He claimed that the Hebrew king Solomon founded the city because of them. Zenobia's house perhaps had access to running water through pipes. But even some wealthy houses had only modest wells and no serious plumbing.¹⁰⁵ Servants had to draw their water from elsewhere and carry it in ceramic, glass, metal, or goatskin vessels. In poorer households, wives and daughters did this sort of work. In Zenobia's house, this was the responsibility of domestic servants. However it arrived, Zenobia did not work for her water.

Modern authors have often idealized Zenobia. It is easy to forget that she had to produce waste. Her house had washbasins and perhaps

⁹⁹ Tober (2013) 224–38.

¹⁰⁰ Tober (2013) 209–23, with Charles-Gaffiot (2001) nos. 69–76; Colledge (1976) 104, Fig. 136.

¹⁰¹ Hammad (2010) 10–11. These are probably from the Roman period.

¹⁰² On water management, see Crouch (1975b); Piacentini (2001); Yon (2009a); Hauser (2012); Juchniewicz and Żuchowska (2012); Żuchowska (2003): Great Colonnade; Plattner (2013) 97–117 (esp. 99–101, 114–16): “Hellenistic settlement”; Hammad (2010) 34–38; Smith (2013) 71–72.

¹⁰³ Yon (2009a) esp. 99; Seyrig and Duru (2005) 29; Collart (1969) 18; Hammad (2010).

¹⁰⁴ Josephus, *AJ* 8.153–54.

¹⁰⁵ Gawlikowski (2007b) 90; Ertel and Ployer (2013) 155–56, (2016) 95–97; Frézouls (1976) 40–41.

latrines as well.¹⁰⁶ These would have let waste into a nearby sewer under a street, like the Great Colonnade.¹⁰⁷ Or Zenobia may have expelled her waste into ceramic vessels that servants then hauled away. Palmyrenes had uses for human waste. Urine could tan leather, full wool, or dye garments. Feces were used as fertilizer.¹⁰⁸ So Zenobia's waste helped feed Palmyra's economy and ecology.

Zenobia's family surely owned rural property too. Some hinterland villages sported large buildings which could adjoin large enclosures for animals or agriculture. Archaeologists have classified them as estates. Like the city houses, these consisted of courtyards surrounded by rooms.¹⁰⁹ One presumes that Zenobia's family owned one or more of them near their lands. Some of them they leased to farmers or shepherds who lived in more modest houses. Near its holdings Zenobia's household probably had a religious shrine. Residents of the hinterland often worshipped a god named Abgal.¹¹⁰ Zenobia's husband Odainath certainly did.¹¹¹

Like all labor, domestic work had strong status implications in antiquity. In poor or middling families, women were vital to the household economy. They cooked and baked. They ground grain. They drew and carried water. They brewed beer and made ceramic vessels and dishes. In the hinterland, they could help tend flocks or reap harvests. They spun, wove, and made textiles for household use or sale.¹¹² Textile production was often vital to a household's income. It also expressed feminine modesty and trustworthiness. So before the 3rd century, funerary portraits of Palmyrene women often depict them holding spindles and distaffs.¹¹³ The metacarpal bones of sheep, which modern Bedouin use in weaving, were sometimes buried with Palmyrene women too.¹¹⁴ As a young woman of wealth, Zenobia did not engage in most manual work. Others did it for her, as slaves or paid domestic servants. But Zenobia learned to spin and weave. As a future matron, she could expect to manage the textile production of her husband's household.

¹⁰⁶ Gawlikowski (2007b) 90; Ertel and Ployer (2013) 155–56, (2016) 95–97; Frézouls (1976) 40–41.

¹⁰⁷ Żuchowska (2003); Juchniewicz and Żuchowska (2012) 65–66.

¹⁰⁸ Baird (2014) 101–2.

¹⁰⁹ Meyer (2013), with Schlumberger (1951) 14–50.

¹¹⁰ Schlumberger (1951) 13–22.

¹¹¹ Yon (2013) no. 61; Gorea (2007) 162–64, with *PAT* 1684.

¹¹² The contributions of Nakhai (2008), Budin and Webb (2016), with Ebeling (2016).

¹¹³ Heyn (2016) 196–97 discusses this topic. For portraits, see Raja (2015a); Heyn (2010). For wool textiles, spindles, and whorls at Dura-Europos, see Baird (2014) 183–84.

¹¹⁴ Saito (2010).

We have now caught glimpses of Zenobia's domestic world. We have contemplated how labor shaped it. But so far we have only hinted at one of its key dimensions. During her life, Zenobia and her household owned slaves.

Servants, Slaves, and Sex Work

In the 2nd century, a Palmyrene living near Hadrian's wall in Britain commemorated his wife with a funerary stele. It bore her image and a bilingual epitaph:

Latin: To the Divine Shades. For Regina, freedwoman (*liberta*) and wife, a Catuallana, 30 years old. Barates, a Palmyrene by origin (made).

Palmyrenean: Regina, freedwoman (*bt ḥry*) of Bar'ata. Alas!¹¹⁵

Bar'ata's inscription testifies to the movement of Palmyrenes throughout the Roman Empire. But it calls to mind the human bondage and sexual violence in which Palmyrenes took part.¹¹⁶ As Bar'ata's slave, Regina did not have the option of refusing sex. One wonders whether this changed after her manumission and betrothal. Masters could easily compel freedwomen to marry them.¹¹⁷ Regina's funerary inscription noticeably emphasizes her servile origins more than her spousal status.

The testimony of Bar'ata's inscription is valuable. The literary sources say little about Zenobia's slaves. The *Historia Augusta* alone makes a brief comment. It states, "She [Zenobia] maintained eunuchs of venerable age in her service, and many fewer young girls."¹¹⁸ In this way, it portrays Zenobia as a chaste woman.¹¹⁹ We will return to this. But its biases are standard Roman ones. It frames Zenobia as an eastern despot. It depicts men of the Near East as emasculated. Zenobia, manly as ever, dominates them.

¹¹⁵ PAT 0246 (=RIB 1065; romaninscriptionsofbritain.org/inscriptions/1065 for image). Adams (2003) 254–55; Hutton and Bonesho (2016) 270–74; Cussini (2004) 236–37 discuss the inscription, including its nonstandard datives.

¹¹⁶ Mattingly (2011) 94–121 explores this subject.

¹¹⁷ Perry (2013) 8–42, 88–93, 118–19.

¹¹⁸ HA TT 30.19–20.

¹¹⁹ Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see p. 215, n. 1).



FIGURE 4.1 Relief of Reclining Woman from Sarcophagus, Palmyra Museum (see Fig. 4.4) (photo by author)

The modern imagination has often idealized Zenobia. But she was a slave owner. Some of her slaves were perhaps eunuchs. Owning eunuchs was a fairly common practice in antiquity.¹²⁰ But this does not mean that Zenobia surrounded herself with them. While eunuchs are attested to have resided at Assyrian courts, some scholars now doubt that they were otherwise widespread.¹²¹ Greek and Roman authors often place them at Near Eastern palaces, usually without validation.¹²² Perhaps Zenobia did not rely primarily on eunuchs after all.

Inscriptions and funerary portraits at Palmyra indicate some of the work that Zenobia's slaves did.¹²³ In Palmyrene funerary sculpture, slaves attend their masters by holding clothes, jewelry, or folding tablets and book-rol cases (Fig. 4.1*).¹²⁴ At Dura-Europos, a domestic painting

¹²⁰ Harper (2011) 337–39.

¹²¹ Pirngruber (2011), on Assyrian's sources and Ctesias' testimony.

¹²² Lightfoot (2002); Andrade (2014) 309–10.

¹²³ For slaves at Palmyra, see Smith (2013) 104–7.

¹²⁴ al-As'ad and Schmidt-Colinet (2005) Fig. 64. Also Tanabe (1986) nos. 432–39; Ploug (1995) no. 126; Colledge (1976) Fig. 107.

depicts slaves who serve banqueting Palmyrenes.¹²⁵ So does a tomb painting at Palmyra.¹²⁶ Zenobia had domestic servants who tended to her dress and jewelry. These also prepared meals and baths, collected water, removed waste, and did other domestic tasks. Their labor made her household's textiles. Her childhood wet-nurse and tutor were probably slaves. Others managed or worked on her household's estates.

At Palmyra, slaves were often imported. They came from Roman Syria or from Parthian territories to the east. Slaves and freedmen typically had Greek, Iranian, or Mesopotamian Aramaic names not common at Palmyra, including Hermes, Wardan, and Abdnergal.¹²⁷ The Palmyrene Tax Law imposes a tax on slave imports and exports.¹²⁸ It also distinguishes between slaves that had recently been imported and "veteran" slaves, who had been in Palmyra for more than a year.¹²⁹

The Palmyrene evidence for slavery is weighted toward freedmen. But the unfree left traces too.¹³⁰ One man commissioned a funerary portrait for his slave Malku and placed it alongside those for his household.¹³¹ A servant made a votive offering for "the children of his masters."¹³² Both urban and rural inscriptions from 270–272 mention servants (*tly*) too.¹³³ A funerary inscription even commemorates a female slave (*'mt*) of Zabda who was the servant (*tlyt'*) of Nebuza. Owned by Zabda, she apparently tended to Nebuza, a member of his household.¹³⁴ Zenobia's Odainath had a servant (*tly*) named Nebuza.¹³⁵ We will encounter him again, in Chapter 6.

Other inscriptions let us glimpse the lives of freedmen and freedwomen.¹³⁶ Some made religious dedications that have survived.¹³⁷ Some owned property, managed households, or earned places of distinction on funerary sarcophagi. They could become guardians and

¹²⁵ *TEAD* 6, Pl. 42.2 (146–72).

¹²⁶ al-As'ad (2013) 18–19, Fig. 7.

¹²⁷ Yon (2001) 186–87.

¹²⁸ *PTL* iia.2–7, iib.80–86 (Palmyrenean); iia.1–8 (Greek)

¹²⁹ Healey (2009) 192.

¹³⁰ Smith (2013) 105 discusses the evidence.

¹³¹ *PAT* 0464.

¹³² *PAT* 1442.

¹³³ *PAT* 1677 (=Schlumberger (1951) no. 14); *PAT* 1358. Also *IGLS* 17.1.415. The term *tly* could denote temple oblates or children, Yon (2001) 190–92; Smith (2013) 105. But see the next note.

¹³⁴ al-As'ad, Gawlikowski, and Yon (2012) no. 57.

¹³⁵ Yon (2013) nos. 61, 157.

¹³⁶ Yon (2001) 186–96; Smith (2013) 105–106.

¹³⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.321.

foster-parents.¹³⁸ A funerary inscription and portrait portrays a certain “Ammai, freedwoman (*brt hry*) of Zebida, foster-mother of Bareiki, son of Bara.” She was buried in the tomb of her former master’s descendants.¹³⁹ She had been the foster-mother or nurse for one of them.

Some freedmen and freedwomen owned tomb properties.¹⁴⁰ Iulius Aurelius Hermes established a tomb for his wife Iulia Aurelia Prima and their children. Prima, a former slave too, later sold funerary spaces in it.¹⁴¹ In one intriguing case, the freedman of a freedwoman named Amtšelma bought a tomb space.¹⁴² We also encounter freedwomen who owned tomb properties. In one instance, Iulia Aurelia Šalmat and Ummadabu, a freedwoman, transferred tomb space to buyers. The “cession” inscription described Ummadabu as her son’s guardian. She had apparently had jural responsibilities for her child after her husband had died.¹⁴³

So we have glimpses of Palmyrene slaves and freedmen, the sort that Zenobia owned and even manumitted. In some inscriptions masters express affection for the slaves they exploited. We do not know how the slaves perceived this. But one Palmyrene helped decorate the temple of Nabu “for the life of” his brother and his freedman.¹⁴⁴ In one tomb, a wealthy Palmyrene named Malku had three sarcophagi and their lids arranged as a “triclinium.” This form of dining entailed three couches (*klinai*) around a table. On one lid, the figures of Malku and his father reclined. Malku was dressed as a priest. But on another lid, the freedman Hermes reclined while accompanied by Malku’s mother and children.¹⁴⁵ An intriguing discovery in this same tomb was a plaque of a woman who commemorated her husband, son, and freedmen. It was placed in another tomb but transferred later.¹⁴⁶

A confusing aspect of Palmyrene sculpture is a haircut often associated with slaves and eunuchs. It involves a close-cropped style of hair on the crown and temples and so-called “slave locks” that run down the

¹³⁸ For *mrbyn/mrbyh* as foster-parent (or tutor/nurse), Cussini (2016) 49.

¹³⁹ PAT 2695. For more, see p. 106, n. 91.

¹⁴⁰ PAT 0049–50, 0072, 0075; Cussini (1995) 250; Smith (2013) 105.

¹⁴¹ IGLS 17.1.439; PAT 2725, with Cussini (2005a) 31, 35–36.

¹⁴² PAT 0044.

¹⁴³ PAT 0095; Cussini (2005a) 33–35; Healey (2009) 221. For a funerary portrait of Šalmat and daughter, see p. 64, n. 24.

¹⁴⁴ IGLS 17.1.183.

¹⁴⁵ SFP no. 120, Fig. 232–34 (=PAT 1893–94); Smith (2013) 106.

¹⁴⁶ PAT 1896 (with RSP 104 for commentary).

shoulders and back. But identification of this “slave” hairstyle is based on only one inscribed relief.¹⁴⁷ In the other sculptures, the people who bear it are not obviously slaves.¹⁴⁸ Freeborn people may have opted for it too.

A similarly weak basis has been used to identify eunuchs in Palmyrene sculpture. This is why Zenobia’s fetish for eunuchs is doubtful. No inscriptions on portraits identify people as eunuchs. Eunuchism has been surmised whenever a woman (or woman figure) wears normatively manly attire or close-cropped hair, especially “slave locks.” Most famous is the funerary relief whose inscription reads: “the image (*šlmt*) of Battai, daughter of Yarhai, alas.” Battai could be either a male or female personal name. But in her inscription, “image” (*šlmt*) is rendered in the feminine gender. Battai also has the status of daughter, and she wears the clothing of a maiden. Despite these traits, her close-cropped hairstyle and “slave locks” have earned her a reputation as a eunuch.¹⁴⁹ She is in fact a young woman.¹⁵⁰ At Palmyra, both men and young women sometimes wore the close-cropped hairstyle,¹⁵¹ both with and without “slave locks.”¹⁵² Palmyrenes would not necessarily have portrayed eunuchs with women’s features. At Dura-Europos, a eunuch named Otes commissioned a painting and Greek inscription that identified him as a eunuch. But he wore male dress and hairstyle, and the inscription consistently treats him as male.¹⁵³

In short, Palmyrene women, especially girls and maidens, could assume “male” fashions. As a result, the features of male and female figures in funerary portraits were somewhat interchangeable.¹⁵⁴ We must also remember that Greek and Roman sources often ascribed eunuchism to Near Eastern peoples in what amounts to “Orientalist” stereotyping. Lucian of Samosata, a Syrian, famously depicts sacred eunuchism combined with cross-dressing as a practice of the “Assyrians”

¹⁴⁷ Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg-Hansen (1998) no. 126 (=PAT 0679).

¹⁴⁸ Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg-Hansen (1998) nos. 84–85 (84=PAT 0743). See Cussini (2000) for key discussion.

¹⁴⁹ Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg-Hansen (1998) no. 84 (=PAT 0743). Finlayson (2005) 66–67; Colledge (1976) 72, Fig. 91 (with Fig. 95) discuss as eunuch.

¹⁵⁰ Cussini (2000) 281–83.

¹⁵¹ Hvidberg-Hansen (1998)/Ploug (1995) nos. 60, 84–85, 126.

¹⁵² Cussini (2000) 281–83 discusses this topic.

¹⁵³ Cumont (1926) no. 9, with Plates 55–58.

¹⁵⁴ Long (2016) 146. Tanabe (1986) no. 273 (from hypogeum of Ta’ai), nos. 410, 415 (from the tomb of Malku), discussed by Finlayson (2005) 65–66, 68; Ploug (1995) no. 60.

at Hierapolis-Manbog.¹⁵⁵ But it is gently parodying the tendency for Greeks and Romans to ascribe eunuchism to Syrian religious contexts.¹⁵⁶ Nothing at Palmyra suggests that it was routinely practiced. Zenobia may have owned some eunuchs as slaves. But she did not own them exclusively or simply because she was an “eastern” ruler.

The Palmyrene Tax Law imposes a tariff on profits derived from sex work. Sex workers at Palmyra could be free. But sex work was also intimately tied to the slave trade.¹⁵⁷ An anecdote that circulated during Zenobia’s lifetime shows how. Narrated by Philostratus, it involved the famous 1st-century sage Apollonius of Tyana.¹⁵⁸ Apollonius undertook a wondrous overland journey from the eastern Roman empire to India. But when he crossed from Roman to Parthian territory at the Syrian bridgehead of Zeugma, he encountered a customs official. When the official asked him to report his exports, Apollonius listed his philosophical virtues, all being Greek nouns of the feminine gender. He was bringing Moderation, Justice, Goodness, Self-Control, Manliness, and Discipline. The collector responded that his women slaves had to be registered.

For a Roman audience, it was a darkly humorous episode. The humor turned on the fact that women slaves, especially entertainers, were a common export to eastern lands. Likewise, many women endured the threat of extralegal captivity, especially during martial conflict.¹⁵⁹ Apollonius’s tax collector even believed that slaves subjected to the unrestrained lusts of potential buyers could bear Greek names that meant “Moderation” or “Self-Control.” Other anecdotes describe slave entertainers at royal courts in the Asian hinterland. In the *Acts of Thomas*, the protagonist, sold into slavery himself, encounters a Jewish dancing girl on his way to India.¹⁶⁰ Kings in India reportedly coveted slaves from the Roman world as entertainers.¹⁶¹ The Palmyrenes profited from this trade too. We have already learned how slaves and sex workers were taxed. Some merchants presumably trafficked in both. Sculptures of nude women, including one apparently of a dancing girl, hint at the commodifying of women’s flesh.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁵ Lucian, *DDS* 51, with 15, 19–27.

¹⁵⁶ For key discussion, see Lightfoot (2002, 2003) esp. 196–207; Andrade (2013) 288–313, with references.

¹⁵⁷ *PTL* iia-b.47–51 (Palmyrenean); iiib.75–79 (Greek). Smith (2013) 102 discusses this matter.

¹⁵⁸ Philostratus, *VA* 1.20.

¹⁵⁹ Gaca (2014); Harper (2011) 80–81.

¹⁶⁰ *Acts of Thomas* 5–10 in Bonnet (1903); Wright (1871) q’w-q’t.

¹⁶¹ *PME* 49.

¹⁶² Colledge (1976) 105, Figs. 133, 135.

Zenobia was fortunate. She was not a slave. She instead profited from their work. She was not dragged far from home for sexual exploitation. She was a Palmyrene elite, and her social network protected her. As she grew, she increasingly spent her day with women and apart from casual contact with men. But even so, Zenobia was not isolated. She still moved about Palmyra's urban topography. She still took part in its activities. We have encountered women like Zenobia in procession. We know of various women who engaged in religious activity in public places. Let's think about them and what they add to our image of Zenobia.

Women and Religious Life

We are confident that Zenobia was active in Palmyra's religious life. The problem is that no inscriptions say so. But some do provide glimpses of how women interacted with Palmyra's gods. So a woman named Makkai offered an inscribed altar to her chosen divinity:

Palmyrenean: To the one whose name is blessed forever,
good and merciful, Makkai, daughter of Oga,
the wife of Malê, son of Malku, made this altar
for her life and the life of her daughter, in the
month Tebet, the year 518.¹⁶³

A certain Aqamath likewise dedicated a relief that depicted a pair of hands stretched in prayer. Its inscription stated:

Greek: Akamathe, daughter of Males, son of Elabelos,
fulfilling a vow.

Palmyrenean: To [the great god], master of the breathing,
and the one whose [name] is blessed
[forever], Aqamath, daughter of [Malê, son]
of Elahbel, gives thanks. She called him in the
dark . . . and he answered her back . . .¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ PAT 0360. On women's dedications, see Cussini (2005a) 29–30.

¹⁶⁴ IGLS 17.1.383; Cussini (2004) 241.

These dedications help us situate Zenobia in her religious world. We have already encountered her in procession at Palmyra. Her activity was common for women of elite status. Wealth and privilege afforded women unique opportunities to participate in Palmyra's religious life. Women of means like Makkai and Aqamath left conspicuous dedications at Palmyra. Some of them are visible in the material record.

But prayer was not limited by wealth, status, and gender. Anyone could pray. Palmyrenes prayed and made offerings to their gods in exchange for favors and aid. Some inscribed dedications celebrate how gods fulfilled prayers. Religious and funerary images also inform us about how Palmyrenes prayed. Men and women raised their hands, palms outward, to the sky or simply at chest level (Fig. 4.2).¹⁶⁵ In funerary portraits, especially before c. 200, women sometimes raised their right hand, perhaps also a gesture of prayer.¹⁶⁶ Zenobia prayed in such ways.

Palmyrenes often made incense offerings to their gods. They burned pellets of myrrh or frankincense, which then released sweet smells (Figs. 4.3, 4.4). They did so in vessels, on dishes, or on altars (Fig. 4.2). They also made libations. This involved pouring oil or wine into bowls, which could mount altars. They could also offer bread, cereals, fruits, or vegetables enriched with oil, incense, or perfumed wine. Palmyrenes made animal sacrifices too. Birds could be killed and burned on the altars. Animal sacrifices of cattle, goats, or sheep, especially in large numbers, fell to those with greater resources.¹⁶⁷ The Palmyrenes probably prohibited pig sacrifices, and consumption.¹⁶⁸ Zenobia certainly presented offerings over her lifetime. She did so in the courtyard of her house for domestic gods, and she did so in tombs for her kin.¹⁶⁹

Zenobia also made offerings of animals, gold, or wine at Palmyra's civic sanctuaries. At many events of the ritual calendar, priests and their attendants conducted sacrifices and placed offerings on altars for Zenobia.¹⁷⁰ Certain reliefs show sacrifices in which priests are flanked by attendants who lead animals or carry offerings. On one sarcophagus relief, a Palmyrene wears a Roman toga while he tends to an altar

¹⁶⁵ Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) nos. 149, 157; Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg Hansen (1998) no. 129; probably a woman and her daughter.

¹⁶⁶ Heyn (2010) 636–37; (2016) 200.

¹⁶⁷ Kaizer (2002) 177–200, (2008a) informs this and following paragraphs.

¹⁶⁸ Lucian, *DDS* 54; Herodian, 5.6.9; Lev 11.7–8; Forstenpointner and Weissengruber (2013) 261–67.

¹⁶⁹ See p. 161, nn. 90.

¹⁷⁰ Lucian, *DDS* 42; Lev 1–3. See p. 32, nn. 68–70.



FIGURE 4.2 Anonymous god altar (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. 1080; © Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek; photo by Ana Cecilia Gonzales; image adjusted for publication in grayscale by N. Andrade)

(Fig. 4.4*).¹⁷¹ His attendants bring forth a bull and bowls of fruit. The meat from animal sacrifices saw different uses. Some was distributed publicly or burned entirely. Some was used for sacred banquets attended by priests or even divine images, who dressed for the occasion.¹⁷² Certain sacrifices were completely burned on altars. The Roman government benefited from Palmyrene piety by taxing animal sacrifices.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹ On this sarcophagus, with references, p. 97, n. 28. Also, Kaizer (2002) 179.

¹⁷² Dirven (2015) 258, 266; Kaizer (2008c) 184–87.

¹⁷³ *PTL* iic.102–8 (Palmyrenean); iva.181–86 (Greek).



FIGURE 4.3 Dedication to Nemesis, Dura-Europos (Yale University Art Gallery, 1938.5312, image courtesy of Yale University Art Gallery)

We do not know whether women like Zenobia held priesthoods. In the Hellenistic and Roman Near East too, women often served as priests for goddesses.¹⁷⁴ But the priests for Atargatis at Hierapolis-Manbog and for goddesses at Palmyra are sometimes known to be men.¹⁷⁵ No women are attested to be priests at Dura-Europos.¹⁷⁶ Whether Zenobia was eligible for priesthoods is a murky issue.

But nothing prevented Zenobia from making dedications to her gods of choice. Reliefs depict women who participate in ritual or make offerings.¹⁷⁷ We have learned about the perishable ones. Palmyrenes

¹⁷⁴ Yon (2009b); Finlayson (2013).

¹⁷⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.177; Lucian, *DDS* 42.

¹⁷⁶ Yon (2016).

¹⁷⁷ Smith (2013) 101–2; Finlayson (2013) Figs. 1–2. See p. 17, n. 2 and p. 32, n. 68.

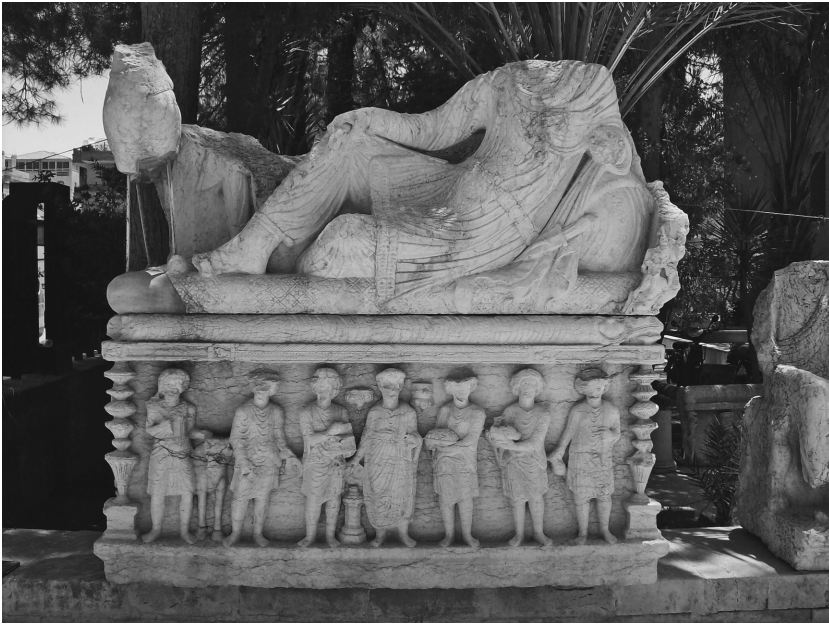


FIGURE 4.4 Sarcophagus of Palmyrene notable, Palmyra Museum (photo by author)

dedicated objects made of stone, bronze, or even gold. Some bear inscriptions that identify their dedicators. At Palmyra, those with means offered altars. They also paid for columns, with their entablatures and ceilings. Some belonged to temples, others to the peristyle colonnades that surrounded them. Occasionally, Palmyrenes dedicated entire colonnaded porticos, banquet halls for ritual dining, or even the temples themselves. Others contributed smaller cult objects. These could be reliefs of gods, bronze doors for a sacred precinct, incense burners, lamps, and money for sacrifices and the distribution of sacrificial meat. Or they could be gold and silver tableware for libations and ritual dining. Gold-laced cushions were offered too.¹⁷⁸

At Palmyra, such dedications expressed religious piety. They also amplified the prestige of specific families, clans, or tribes in the eyes of fellow Palmyrenes. Women made a small portion of the surviving inscribed dedications. We have encountered the column that Amatallat

¹⁷⁸ For inscriptions: *IGLS* 17.1.18, 21, 263, 306, 308, 312; Drijvers (1995b) 111=Yon (2013) no. 57. *IGLS* 17.1.114 for a *qlstr'* of silver. *PAT* 0301. Altar dedications are in the hundreds. See Kaizer (2002) 177–97 on dedications.

made for Baal-Shamin in 67 CE.¹⁷⁹ We have also met Makkai and Aqamath, who made dedications too. In 23 CE, two sisters, named Attai and Shabhai, and another woman named Ata commissioned three columns to Baal-Shamin.¹⁸⁰ Other dedications by women are known.¹⁸¹ No religious offerings by Zenobia survive, but surely she made them.

At various times, Zenobia engaged in lustral bathing at Palmyra's major sanctuaries, including the precinct for Bel. It purified her after a prescribed period of uncleanness. Evidence at Palmyra is scarce. But the Syrian Sanctuary on Delos and the Hebrew Bible provide some points of comparison.¹⁸² Near Eastern peoples often believed that child-bearing, miscarriage, or menstruation brought uncleanness for days or weeks. These beliefs disproportionately targeted women. Eating fish or pork could also yield short periods of ritual impurity. If Palmyrenes observed this rule, they perhaps ate salted fish and pork on occasion anyway.¹⁸³ Worshippers like Zenobia had to wait their specified time before bathing. Once cleansed, they could enter a temple.

Palmyra housed associations for ritual banqueting.¹⁸⁴ Wealthy Palmyrenes usually paid for the banquet and invited clients and kin. Clay tokens (*tesserae*), distributed beforehand, were the entrance tickets. Concentrations of these have been found at the temples of Bel and Arsu. Dining rooms were at the temple of Bel, the temple of Baal-Shamin, the third segment of the Great Colonnade, and the agora. One was probably at the temple of Arsu.¹⁸⁵ Presumably there were more.

As with priesthoods, the evidence for Palmyrene men organizing and participating in ritual banquets is overwhelming. They ate and drank together, probably to music, as members of a *marzeah* (*symposion* in Greek).¹⁸⁶ But most *tesserae* (clay or lead tokens) are associated with cults to gods. One wonders whether women organized ritual banquets for goddesses. At Dura-Europos, women apparently gathered to perform rites for Artemis, Atargatis, and Azzanathkona.¹⁸⁷ But we know much less about cults for goddesses at Palmyra. This aspect of Zenobia's life remains in the shadows.

¹⁷⁹ PAT 0168.

¹⁸⁰ PAT 0167; Cussini (2005a) 29.

¹⁸¹ Cussini (2005a) 29–30.

¹⁸² *IDelos* 2530; Lev 12, 15; Kaizer (2002) 185–86, (2008a) 183.

¹⁸³ Forstenpointner and Weissengruber (2013) 261–67; *PTL* iia.34 (Palmyrenean).

¹⁸⁴ Key discussion is Raja (2015b), (2016b), Kaizer (2008a) 187–91, Delplace (2005), Smith (2013) 109–16, with PAT 0991.

¹⁸⁵ Raja (2015b) 181, (2016b) 347–50; Kaizer (2008a); Delplace (2005).

¹⁸⁶ Kaizer (2002) 229–34; Gnoli (2016); Raja (2016b).

¹⁸⁷ Cumont (1926) nos. 57–121; *TEAD* 5, nos. 510–55; Yon (2016).

In her lifetime, Zenobia prayed and made votives to a god that she called “the one whose name is blessed forever” (*lbryk šmh lʾlm*). On surviving altars and votive columns (see Fig. 4.2 for an example),¹⁸⁸ Palmyrenes invoked the formula far more than any named divinity. Such dedications also celebrate how prayers were heard and answered. Palmyrenes prayed with this formula in times of crisis. Some have argued that Palmyrenes used the formula for Baal-Shamin or Yarhibol. It is more probable that they addressed gods of their choosing with it, following longstanding Aramaean, Assyrian, and Babylonian customs.¹⁸⁹ We may not have any of Zenobia’s dedications. But prayers to “the one whose name is blessed forever” passed her lips.

When Zenobia prayed or made offerings, she did so for her loved ones. Dedications that women made show for whom. When she became a mother, she did it for her children. But throughout her life, she did it for her siblings and parents. Perhaps she prayed for her uncles and cousins too. In times of sickness and danger, she raised her hands and asked her gods to listen and answer. In 272, they did not.

The gods of Zenobia’s Palmyra were diverse in origin.¹⁹⁰ Allat, Arsu, Abgal, and Manawat were Arabian.¹⁹¹ So were the spirits called *ginn* (*gnyʾ*) and the shrouded portable chapels that camels carried in processions.¹⁹² We have encountered Zenobia reverently following one. Baal-Shamin, Astarte, Atargatis, and Baal-Hammon were among the Aramaean or Canaanite gods.¹⁹³ *Gad*, or Fortune, was too.¹⁹⁴ Bel, Nabu, Nergal, and Shamash came from Mesopotamia.¹⁹⁵ Certain gods were of local origin. Such were Malakbel, Aglibol, and Yarhibol.¹⁹⁶ Palmyra’s Bel may have initially been called “Bol” too.¹⁹⁷ Palmyrenes associated many of their gods with Greek counterparts. Bel and Baal-Shamin were Zeus. Allat was Athena. Arsu was Ares.

¹⁸⁸ Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg Hansen (1998) no. 129.

¹⁸⁹ Kubiak (2013, 2016).

¹⁹⁰ Principally Kaizer (2002); Duchâteau (2013) 353–504.

¹⁹¹ Kaizer (2002) 99–108, 109–15, 116–24; Schlumberger (1951) 126–28.

¹⁹² Schlumberger (1951) 121–22, 135–37; Finlayson (2013) 66–67; Le Bihan (2013).

¹⁹³ Kaizer (2002) 71–89, 108–15, 153–54.

¹⁹⁴ Kaizer (1997), (1998); Dirven (1999) 99–127; Schlumberger (1951) 121–22; Duchâteau (2013) 533–80.

¹⁹⁵ Kaizer (2002) 67–79, 89–100.

¹⁹⁶ Kaizer (2002) 124–48.

¹⁹⁷ Gawlikowski (2015).

The Aramaean *Gad* (Fortune) was a man, and the Greek *Tyche* (Fortune) was a woman. But Palmyrenes made them correspond.¹⁹⁸ They adopted Greek gods too. So they worshipped Nemesis (Fig. 4.3) and a god with Herakles's features.¹⁹⁹ During her lifetime, Zenobia expressed her devotion to gods of many origins.

Temples and sanctuaries shaped Zenobia's religious life. Their architecture was as eclectic as Palmyra's gods. On their exteriors they had Greek and Roman features. They sported peristyles (surrounding rows of columns) and prostyles (columns at their entrances). Peristyle colonnades also could enclose temple precincts. But Near Eastern conventions also left their mark. The enclosing of precincts with walls was widespread.²⁰⁰ Cult statues inhabited an innermost sanctuary of a temple's interior room (*cella* or *naos*). Such rooms often preserved the space of a prior mud-brick chapel (Aramaic: *hamana*).²⁰¹ Lucian's *On the Syrian Goddess* indicates that only priests entered the innermost sanctuary at Hierapolis-Manbog,²⁰² just like Jewish priests at Jerusalem.²⁰³

Zenobia's world was enriched by visual art. It owed debts to many traditions. Most surviving images of gods consist of reliefs, though statues presumably existed too.²⁰⁴ These portray gods with frontal poses and distinctive iconographies. In some such reliefs, worshippers light incense burners (Figs. 4.3–4.4).²⁰⁵ These types of likenesses are commonly attested in the contemporary Near East, especially Dura-Europos.²⁰⁶ The Palmyrenes could portray mythic scenes with Mesopotamian origins. At the temple of Bel, a peristyle relief displayed how Palmyra's gods confronted the beast Tiamat (who had snakes legs).²⁰⁷ But we have also learned that house mosaics celebrated Greek myths with Greek artistic styles. We will encounter tomb frescoes that do too. Occasionally, divinities or heroes like Dionysos, Heracles, or Ganymede appeared in

¹⁹⁸ Dirven (1999) 99–127.

¹⁹⁹ Kaizer (2000, 2001).

²⁰⁰ Downey (1988); Freyberger (1998); Ball (2016) 372–406; Gawlikowski (1989); Butcher (2003) 351–70 (esp. 352–54).

²⁰¹ Gawlikowski (1997a); *IGLS* 17.1.12; *PAT* 0991, 1429, 1608.

²⁰² Lucian, *DDS* 31. For such Syrian temples, Gawlikowski (1989).

²⁰³ Josephus, *BJ* 1.152; *AJ* 14.72.

²⁰⁴ Dirven (2015), esp. 259.

²⁰⁵ Colledge (1976) Figs. 39–44; Kaizer (2002) 177–82; Tanabe (1986) nos. 58, 103, 107, 111, 116, 128, 132–36, 140.

²⁰⁶ Dirven (2015). See also Perkins (1973) 70–114; Dirven (1999); Butcher (2003) 307–13.

²⁰⁷ Tanabe (1986) nos. 32–33; Kaizer (2002) 202–5.

the “heroic nude” in frescoes, sculptures, or figurines.²⁰⁸ But such nudes are rare.

We have now glimpsed Zenobia’s religious universe. We have also glanced at her social world. These are vital dimensions of our likeness of her. But we can explore other key elements of Zenobia’s lived experiences, as she comes of age.

²⁰⁸ Kaizer (2000) 225; Kaizer (2010b) 26–27; Colledge (1976) Fig. 36, with 135; Balty (2014); Allag, Blanc, and Parlasca (2010) 217–21; Butcher (2003) 313–37.

5

Coming of Age

We have glanced at Zenobia's social universe. We will now glimpse Zenobia as she navigates the transition from maidenhood to marriage, the threshold of womanhood in the Palmyrene community. Most aspects of this intricate transition are beyond our grasp. But we can still capture some social factors at Palmyra that governed them. So we will think about the clothes that Zenobia wore. We will ponder her hygiene and education. We will witness the paradigms of courtship and betrothal that would bring her to the household of Odainath. By doing so, we can gain a deeper understanding of the matron and mother that Zenobia would come to be.

Clothing and Jewelry

As a maiden, Zenobia surely was attuned to the social and gender distinctions embedded in attire at Palmyra. So it is worthwhile to contemplate how she dressed. Attentive to Zenobia's appearance, the *Historia Augusta* comments on her clothes:

Like Roman emperors, she proceeded to public gatherings in a helmet and a purple belt. Gems dangled along its lowest edge, and a cochlea jewel also fastened its middle, just like a woman's fibula. Her arms were often exposed.¹

¹ HA TT 30.14.

Yet again, the *Historia Augusta* depicts Zenobia as unusually masculine while embodying Syrian excesses. It also focuses exclusively on her clothing as an imperial ruler. It is not an ideal source.

Funerary portraits and textiles from Palmyra's tombs inform us about women's attire. We will explore these in a moment. But a papyrus text found at Dura-Europos is of value too. It appraises the clothing and jewelry that a woman named Aurelia Marcellina owned upon remarriage. Marcellina's possessions are reported to include:

2 new white cloaks (*pallion*): 125 and 50 denarii
a tunic (*sticharion*): 40 denarii
a new un-dyed tunic (*delmatikin*): 30 denarii
a red tunic (*delmatikin*) and purple head-cover: 75 denarii
a new white tunic (*delmatikin*): 50 denarii
Persian and striped items: 50 denarii
ceramics and bronzes: 25 denarii;
earrings and rings: 50 denarii.²

This document gives us a decent sense of what Zenobia and Palmyrene women actually wore. Funerary portraits and textile scraps from Palmyra's tombs do so as well (Figs. 5.1–5.4, with Figs. 4.1–4.2). Women often wore a long-sleeved tunic common in the Near East or a sleeveless Greek-style tunic. Over it they donned a mantle or cloak, which could resemble a Greek *himation*. In some portraits, women hold it to their chests, a Roman gesture of feminine virtue. On their heads, women wore textile headbands or headscarves and turbans.³ Married women covered their hair with their cloaks. This custom was widespread in antiquity. Among Assyrians, laws even mandated that matrons cover their hair and that sex workers leave it exposed. At late antique Edessa, a modest woman wore a “covering for her head” whenever in public and interacting with men.⁴ In Palmyra's portraits, bare heads are markers of

² *P. Dura* 30 (the commentary and translation clarify many details), with Baird (2016) 36–37.

³ Key treatments of portraiture or dress: Raja (2015, 2016a, 2017a, 2017b); Heyn (2010); Finlayson (1998), esp. 1.126–38, (2003–2004, 2005, 2008); Kaim (2005); Goldman (2001); Stauffer (2005, 2012); Klaver (2016), Baird (2016), for Dura-Europos. These differ in particulars, but they are synthesized here. See also Sartre and Sartre (2014) 76.

⁴ Pritchard (1969) 183; Roth (1997) 167–69, 205, (2014) 165–66; Stol (2016) 22–28, 405; Assyrians; John of Ephesus, *Lives of the Eastern Saints* in Brooks (1921) 172; Edessa.



FIGURE 5.1 The so-called beauty of Palmyra, 3rd century (Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, inv. 2795.2; © Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek; image adjusted for publication in grayscale by N. Andrade)

girls and maidens (Fig. 5.4). These are portrayed as unmarried, not yet mothers.⁵

Whether women veiled their faces in public is a thorny issue. Given their religious context, the images of veiled women in procession do not let us draw firm conclusions (Fig. 2.1*). Funerary portraits show matrons with covered hair and exposed faces, but we are not certain whether these depict women in public or domestic contexts. In the art of Dura-Europos, women in religious settings are similarly portrayed as veiled but otherwise only have their hair covered.⁶ Various texts indicate that women at Tarsus and Nisibis, and more generally in north Syria and upper Mesopotamia, could have their faces fully veiled (or nearly

⁵ For veils, La Follete (2001) 54–65; Winter (2003) 78–82; Baird (2014) 215–30; Klaver (2016) 379–84 (Dura-Europos).

⁶ Baird (2014) 216–17.

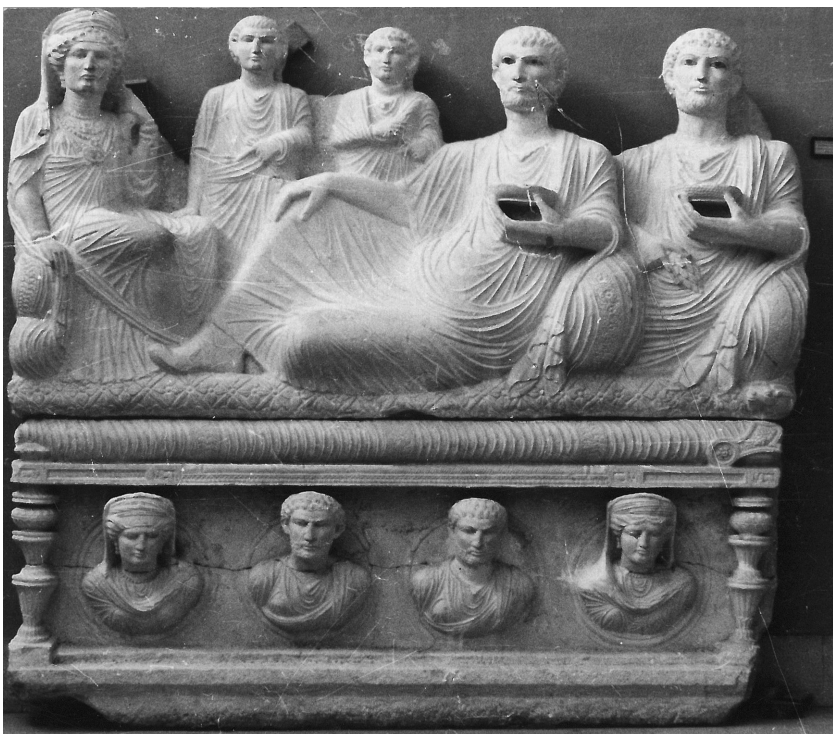


FIGURE 5.2 Banquet relief, probably 3rd century (National Museum of Damascus, C4947, Hypogeum of Malkû, south-west; © Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, PS 980, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek)

so) in public. But these are usually later in date, describe Christian women (even nuns), or relate unusual circumstances.⁷ Once married, Zenobia possibly veiled her face in public. But she may have only covered her hair.

As funerary portraits suggest, clothes did not merely mark gender; they also denoted age. In the portraits, the clothes of little girls and boys, who often hold grapes or birds, consist of tunics and trousers. Their hair is cropped short. So differences of gender were minute, if at times noticeable.⁸ But the attire of maidens resembles those of matrons. Their

⁷ Theodoret, *HR* 29.6, 30.2 in Canivet and Leroy-Molinghen (1977–1979); Ammianus, 18.10; Dio Chrys. 33.48; *Book of the Himyarites* 32 in Moberg (1924) 39. See Segal (1970) 152–53.

⁸ Pierson (1984) 97–101; Krag and Raja (2016) 143. I thank Maura Heyn for her helpful observations and for her lecture on “Embodied Identities” (p. 61, n. 11).



FIGURE 5.3 Funerary portrait of woman and children, probably late 2nd century (Istanbul, inv. 3751; © Palmyra Portrait Project, Ingholt Archive at Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek, PS 363, courtesy of the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek)

hairstyles are often distinctively gendered (but not always).⁹ So we have a sense for how Zenobia dressed at various stages of her life. As a young girl, her attire differed little from that of boys her age. Her hair was short (Fig. 5.3). She wore a simple tunic and trousers but no outer garments. She perhaps wore earrings. As she approached maturity, she increasingly experimented with her clothing and hairstyles. But she let others see her elegant hair (Fig. 5.4). Only when she was married to Odainath did she conceal it in public or when interacting with men.

Palmyrene women touched many fabrics, especially if they were wealthy. They also wore many colors. These too could mark status or inspire desires and anxieties in their viewers.¹⁰ Linen was produced at

⁹ Pierson (1984) 103–4.

¹⁰ Bradley (2009), esp. 161–88.



FIGURE 5.4 Funerary portrait of maiden, probably late 2nd century (Berkshire Museum, 1903.7.6, inscription (*PAT*) 960; photograph © Nathaniel E. Greene and Catherine E. Bonesho, courtesy of the Wisconsin Palmyrene Aramaic Inscription Project and courtesy of Berkshire Museum, Pittsfield, Massachusetts; image adjusted for publication in grayscale by N. Andrade)

Palmyra. It was never dyed. Tunics and mantles were often made of it. But wool and imported cotton were also common. Some wool was local. Dyed wool originated elsewhere.¹¹ Cashmere wool arrived from central Asia or India as yarn and finished cloth.¹² The wealthy could afford Chinese silk, brought by Palmyra's caravans. Nonlinen tunics and outer

¹¹ *PTL* iia.11–12 and iib.67, 94–95 (Palmyrenean); iia.16–17, iva.174 (Greek); Colledge (1976) 98–104.

¹² Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer (2000) 52–53.

garments could sport bright colors. Reds, greens, and blues dominate the surviving textiles and portrait paints. Various patterns and embroidered designs, including leaves, geometric shapes, and animals, could also be woven into cloth.¹³ As we have learned, women treated their clothes as vital items of moveable property.¹⁴ Zenobia could afford the finest fabrics, brightest colors, and arresting patterns. We cannot know her favorites.

As she matured, Zenobia wore jewelry (see Figs. 5.1–5.4) generally. We have already encountered the rings and earrings that women kept at Dura-Europos. In Palmyra's earlier funerary portraits, earrings are common. Some women wear nine in an ear.¹⁵ Even little girls are depicted as wearing them. In later portraits, women are increasingly arrayed in jewelry, perhaps a symptom of Palmyra's increasingly elaborate social stratification and funerary display.¹⁶ Bracelets, forearm clasps, and rings often appear, sometimes in multiples. Necklaces with large medallions adorn women's busts too. Brooches sometimes bind their cloaks. Head chains, jewels, and brooches could form elaborate headgear around women's headscarves or turbans. Most such types of jewelry have been found in Palmyrene tombs or at Dura-Europos.¹⁷ So we can picture what sort of jewels Zenobia and other Palmyrene women wore as maidens or matrons.

The clothes and jewels shown in funerary portraits hint at another element of women's display. Among Bedouin, women often wear the jewelry gifted them by their husbands. By so displaying them, they bolster the reputations of their men.¹⁸ But they also show the trust that they share. Gold and jewelry often embody a vast portion of a household's wealth. We often do not know who commissioned funerary portraits for Palmyrene women. But the fine attire and jewels portrayed on them expressed the generosity and trust of their loved ones. We have seen how women in earlier funerary portraits often hold spindles and distaffs. These conveyed the blessings that women brought to their households through their virtue and management of wealth. Zenobia's clothing and jewelry carried a similar message.¹⁹

¹³ Colledge (1976) 98–104; Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer (2000) 50–55; Stauffer (2005); al-As'ad, al-As'ad, and Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 302–3; Stauffer (2012). At Dura-Europos, Baird (2014) 219.

¹⁴ *P. Dura* 30.

¹⁵ Raja (2015a) 348–49, with chronology.

¹⁶ Heyn (2016) 202–3; Krag (2017) 40–42.

¹⁷ Colledge (1976) 96–97; Raja (2015a), esp. 348–49; Higuchi and Saito (2001) 106–13; Saito (2005) 160–75, (2013) 289; Baird (2014) 219–28, (2016) 38–62.

¹⁸ Lancaster (1997) 66.

¹⁹ For comparison in Roman Italy, see *ILS* 8393, “Laudatio Turiae,” with Osgood (2014).

We have already encountered Zenobia in prayer. She stretched her hands, palm outward, toward the sky or simply at chest level.²⁰ But later funerary portraits show how women at Palmyra expressed modesty. Zenobia would raise her hand, palm inward, to her chest, shoulder, or neck. Or she would hold her mantle to her chest or shoulder (Fig. 5.1–5.4).²¹ In her speech, dress, gestures, and movements, she communicated her modesty by concealing various aspects of her body, but in conspicuous ways.²² We wish we knew more about how she carried herself.

Funerary portraits and honorific statues (to a lesser extent) show us what the men of Zenobia's life wore. They donned linen or wool tunics. Some had long sleeves consistent with Arabian or Parthian practice. Others were sleeveless Greek ones (*chitōn*).²³ For outer garments, men often wore long-sleeved cloaks or Greek mantles (a *himation* or a *chlamys*). Less often, they sported Roman togas. Certain honorific statues from the agora tentatively believed to represent Odainath feature these togas.²⁴ In funerary portraits, many men also famously wear styles of “caravan” dress influenced by Parthian, Persian, or Arabian garb. These included a tunic or caftan, pants, boots, and a cape or mantle. Some funerary portraits even depict men wearing varied clothing styles with a whip, sword, camel, or horse.²⁵ A rectangular hat²⁶ adorned the heads of men who claimed a priestly status. Their heads and faces were shaved.²⁷ Ordinarily, men were portrayed with hair and sometimes beards.

Men presumably wore Greek or Roman styles in civic life. They sported the “caravan” style on military campaigns or trade voyages. These required travel, riding, and combat in the dry steppe. Sarcophagi and funerary portraits hint at how men alternated among clothes. The lid of one notable sarcophagus depicts the deceased in “caravan” dress as he reclines on a banquet couch (*klinē*) (Fig. 4.4). But on the front panel, the same figure is dressed in a Roman toga, with a priestly hat in

²⁰ Heyn (2010) 636–37.

²¹ Heyn (2010) 635–36, (2016) 200; Davies (2017) 25–31.

²² Wilkinson (2015).

²³ Key treatments: Raja (2015), Heyn (2010); Finlayson (1998, 2003–2004, 2006, 2008); Kaim (2005) 113–22; Goldman (2001); Colledge (1976), esp. 145–49; Stauffer (2012).

²⁴ Balty (2005) 321–24, 337–38. See p. 134, n. 146.

²⁵ For catalogue, see Heyn (2010) 656–58, with 643–44. On Parthian dress, see Curtis (2017); Long (2017).

²⁶ For catalogue, see Heyn (2010) 653–56.

²⁷ Raja (2016a, 2017b, 2017c).

the background.²⁸ Funerary portraits most often depict men in Greek dress (often with a *himation*) or caravan garb. Such eclecticism had a long tradition in Hellenistic and Roman Syria, especially among dynasts of Commagene (a region in south Turkey) and other royals.²⁹ We will encounter it in Zenobia's household later, in Chapter 6.

In the *Historia Augusta*, Zenobia cuts a manly figure. This work asserts that she was even braver than Odainath. She could weather wilderness, heat, and the hardships of hunting as well as he could.³⁰ She also would march with her soldiers.³¹ The *Historia Augusta* is the only source to say as much. But at least one funerary portrait appears to depict a woman with baggy trousers beneath her tunic.³² Women who braved the Palmyrene wilderness apparently dressed for the occasion. Zenobia perhaps did too.

So we can envision a young Zenobia who navigated the diverse fashions that Palmyra had to offer. A trip to the Palmyrene agora demanded a Greek cloak and little jewelry. But among relatives or friends, she could display the assorted jewels and clothes her men had given her. Crossing the dry Syrian steppe required the trousers of rugged caravan travelers. Religious processions demanded a veiled face. Zenobia's clothing also shifted with age and life transition. In her youth, her hair was uncovered. But marriage and childbirth brought its concealment from men beyond her household.

Education and Learning

In its usual blend of fact and fiction, the *Historia Augusta* has this to say about Zenobia's learning:

Some think that it was cruel for the philosopher Longinus to be among those executed (by Aurelian). She (Zenobia) had

²⁸ al-As'ad and Schmidt-Colinet (2005) Figs. 60, 62–63. For key discussion, see Schmidt-Colinet (1997) 161–65, Figs. 2, 4 (2004) 193–98, Figs. 7–10 (2009); al-As'ad and Schmidt-Colinet (2005) 42–47, Figs. 60–66; Lucinda Dirven, "Palmyrene Sculpture in Context: Between Hybridity and Heterogeneity," Metropolitan Museum, New York, May 23, 2016, now in Aruz (2018).

²⁹ See Dirven, "Palmyrene Sculpture" in previous note. Facella (2006) 225–98; Kropp (2013) treat royal dynasties.

³⁰ *HA TT* 15.8, 30.17–19.

³¹ *HA TT* 30.17–18.

³² Finlayson (2005) 68, Fig. 3, discusses this matter.

reportedly maintained him as her teacher of Greek learning. In fact, Aurelian allegedly had him killed because that rather arrogant letter of hers was reportedly dictated by his advice, even if crafted in the Syrian language.³³

The testimony of the *Historia Augusta* raises concerns. Moments before accrediting Zenobia's lethal letter to Longinus, it asserts that a certain Nicomachus was responsible for translating it.³⁴ But Nicomachus is a complete unknown,³⁵ and the letter is a fabrication.³⁶ The *Historia Augusta* also alarmingly cites rumor and hearsay repeatedly for its sources. But it is right on one point. As an adult, Zenobia was tutored by Longinus, the famous scholar. Zosimus tells us so.³⁷

Zenobia's relationship with Longinus does not surprise. Many Romans aspired to be masters of Greek rhetoric and philosophy. The best, luckiest, or most fraudulent could even earn the attention and wealth of Roman emperors and senators. Lucian of Samosata, a dynamic Syrian, sheds light on their aspirations. His treatises lampooned the pretensions of various Greek philosophical schools. They also portrayed aspiring sophists as frauds who coveted money, sex, and reputation but not knowledge. Among the most notable charlatans was a certain Peregrinus, who moved among philosophical schools in his quest for fame. In his youth, an adulterous moment allegedly left his rectum filled with radish by an angry husband. But after wandering for a time, he joined what had been a burgeoning Jewish sect and so became a Christian:³⁸

Then he even mastered the wondrous wisdom of the Christians and joined with their priests and scribes all around Palestine. And for what? In short, he declared them his children—he alone was prophet, congregation leader, assembly master (*xynagogeus*), and everything else. He interpreted and expounded upon some of their books, and he even wrote many of them. They recognized him as their god, treated him as their

³³ HA Aur. 30.3.

³⁴ HA Aur. 27.6.

³⁵ PLRE 1.630; Barnes (1972) 165; Southern (2008) 97. Some treat him as Nicomachus Flavianus or Nicostratus of Trezibond, but caution is merited. Bleckmann and Groß (2016) 68–73.

³⁶ PLRE 1.514/15; Barnes (1972) 162.

³⁷ Zos. 1.56.3. On Longinus, p. 180, nn. 96–99.

³⁸ Boyarin (2004) treats the relationship between Judaism and Christianity.

lawmaker (*nomothetēs*), and registered him as their patron—or at least after that one that they still worship, the man who was crucified in Palestine for bringing this new rite to life.³⁹

Eventually imprisoned but pardoned by the governor of Syria, Peregrinus's career as a Christian ended when he broke dietary restrictions.⁴⁰ He became a Cynic but then overreached more than ever. Imitating an Indian Brahmin who endured immolation while visiting the Roman Empire, Peregrinus burned himself alive after the Olympic games. His main critic was unimpressed. Lucian was mostly annoyed by the disgusting smell of roasting flesh.⁴¹

Lucian's satire sheds light on the intellectual trends of his day. Syrians aspiring for recognition in Greek philosophy could become Platonists, Epicureans, Stoics, or Cynics.⁴² They could also study various strands of Jewish or Christian philosophy. These were intertwined with Greek thought. Peregrinus apparently drifted among many different religious schools. We will return to these later in this chapter.

Being successful as the leader of a philosophical school could be profitable. Some started schools in Athens, Rome, and other urban hubs. Or they attracted loyal (and paying) students. A few even earned the largesse of Roman emperors and governors. Jews and Christians played this field too. Receiving little imperial support, they still sought to prevail in debate and to attract disciples from rival schools.⁴³ The competition could be ruthless. Lucian celebrated the immolation of a rival. Justin Martyr and Tatian mocked the intelligence and characters of their pagan and Jewish competitors.⁴⁴ Jews and Christians were often reviled, if not attacked.⁴⁵ But the competition could be dynamic. Writers of all religious backgrounds dialogued and debated with one another. In Chapter 8, we will visit Zenobia's encounter with the intellectual universe that transcended and sharpened religious divides.

Intellectuals with limited horizons could become tutors in elite households. Rome was considered a profitable hunting ground for

³⁹ Lucian, *Pereg.* 9–11 (11 is translated).

⁴⁰ Lucian, *Pereg.* 11–16.

⁴¹ Lucian, *Pereg.* 16–33. For the self-immolating Brahmin, Strabo, 15.1.73 (Nicolaus of Damascus: *FGrH* 90, F. 100); Cass. Dio 54.9; Suet. *Aug* 21.3.

⁴² Lucian's *Fisherman*, *Hermotimus*.

⁴³ Eshleman (2012); Nasrallah (2010); Andrade (2013), 245–313, (2014).

⁴⁴ Justin Martyr, *Apol. Mai.*, *Apol. Min.*, and *Dia.*; Tatian, *Or.*

⁴⁵ Josephus, *Ap.*; Philo, *Leg. ad Gaium* and *Flacc.* See also previous note.

wealthy patrons. But looks were deceptive. We owe another debt to Lucian for lampooning the fate of Greek tutors in Rome.⁴⁶ Instead of seeking knowledge, their patrons displayed them, long beards and all, in their retinues. Without food or money, sophists marched all day behind the litters of their ignorant masters.

We do not know whether sophists fared better at Palmyra. But Palmyra had rhetoricians,⁴⁷ teachers (*sbr'*; *kathegetēs*),⁴⁸ and their students. Some Palmyrenes boasted of their learning by holding (or having slaves hold) a *stylus*, writing tablet, or inkwell in funerary portraits. Many men hold book rolls in them.⁴⁹ In one, a youth writes Greek letters on a tablet.⁵⁰ Wax tablets reportedly from Palmyra tell us about his curriculum. These contain fables of Babrius and passages from Hesiod's *Works and Days*. Riddled with errors, they apparently belonged to the copybook of a youngster who was studying Greek.⁵¹

In the eastern Roman Empire, elite women often did not enjoy much formal education. Households arranged schooling or tutoring in mathematics, philosophy, and rhetoric for young men. Many elite women may have only learned to read, write, sing, and play music.⁵² But some families that associated poetry, mathematics, and philosophy with virtue had daughters study them.⁵³ In Egypt, we encounter a grammarian named Hermione and, later, the famous philosopher Hypatia.⁵⁴ Descended from a Syrian royal dynasty, Julia Balbilla wrote poetry in archaizing Greek.⁵⁵ Some women at Palmyra were literate. One funerary portrait depicts a woman with a pen (*stylus*).⁵⁶

⁴⁶ Lucian, *On Salaried Positions*. See Whitmarsh (2001) 279–92.

⁴⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.79.

⁴⁸ *IGLS* 17.1.38. Smith (2013) 108.

⁴⁹ Sokolowski (2014) (catalogue on 395–403).

⁵⁰ Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) no. 221; Kaizer (2017) 91–93, Figs. 1–2.

⁵¹ Hessling (1892–1893); Kaizer (2017) 90–91. Purchased at Palmyra (late 1800s), they are at Leiden University: https://socrates.leidenuniv.nl/R/QJM3N2NUC7KAL2T2STFCRU3LXBHUGLDJ6QJPUR16IBMF225B2R-00110?func=results-jump-full&set_entry=000003&set_number=000506&base=GEN01-LEI01. Ted Kaizer brought these to my attention in “How to Be a Proper Citizen of Tadmor-Palmyra,” Metropolitan Museum, New York, May 23, 2016, now in Aruz (2018).

⁵² Deslauriers (2012) 352; d'Ambra (2007) 62–65. For an extended discussion, see Hemelrijk (1999).

⁵³ Caldwell (2015).

⁵⁴ D'Ambra (2007) 135–37; Watt (2017).

⁵⁵ Bernand and Bernand (1960) nos. 28–31; Hemelrijk (1999) 164–70.

⁵⁶ Smith (2013) 102, Fig. 4.12.

Zenobia's youthful education is murky. She may have received none at all. She could have learned to read and write in Palmyrenean or Greek. Perhaps she studied Homeric epic, Plato, Aristotle, and other Greek authors. She conceivably explored more contemporary trends in Neo-Platonic philosophy. Or maybe she was self-taught. Domestic décor and oral stories would have brought her into basic contact with Greek myths. She may have seen shows in Palmyra's theater. We are better informed about Zenobia's education as an adult. We have learned how she could read and write Palmyrenean and Greek as ruler. She then maintained teachers in Greek letters, including Longinus.

Zenobia's access to education exposed her to many Greek intellectual trends of the Near East. These penetrated the literary circles of Syria's Christians, Jews, and pagans.⁵⁷ Some figures even claimed that the Greeks' and Romans' greatest achievements had been stolen from Phoenicians, Syrians, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Jews, especially Moses. Josephus (a Jew), Justin Martyr, and Tatian (both Christians) were among them.⁵⁸ Likewise, a pagan sophist named Philo of Byblos argued that a Phoenician named Sanchouniathon had written about the divine order before Homer had lived. The Greek writer Hesiod had then stolen his material.⁵⁹ A 2nd-century figure named Iamblichus reportedly escaped his ethnic Syrian origins and captivity in Babylonia to become a notable Greek novelist.⁶⁰ In the 3rd–4th centuries, Syrians named Porphyry of Tyre and Iamblichus of Chalcis were luminaries of Platonic thought and divine epiphany.⁶¹ A pagan Syrian philosopher familiar with Judeo-Christian scripture had to ask: what is Plato but an Atticizing Moses? By this question, he meant that Plato was a rip-off of Moses who happened to write in Attic Greek.⁶²

By Zenobia's lifetime, Greek cultural traditions had made a profound impact on how Syrians understood themselves.⁶³ We are yet again indebted to Lucian for showing how. His *On the Syrian Goddess* narrates

⁵⁷ On these trends, Millar (1993, 2006, 2015); Bowersock (1990); Butcher (2003), esp. 223–334; Sartre (2005); Eshleman (2012); Nasrallah (2010); Andrade (2013), 245–339, (2014). Their scholarship informs what follows.

⁵⁸ See p. 99, nn. 44–45.

⁵⁹ *BNJ* 790, esp. F. 1–2.

⁶⁰ Photius, *Bibl.* 94.75b, with scholiast, in Henry (2003): 2.40, with n. 1.

⁶¹ Johnson (2013); Kaldellis (2007) 169–70.

⁶² Numenius, Fr. 8, in Des Places (1993).

⁶³ Millar (1993), with articles in Millar (2006, 2015); Bowersock (1990); Butcher (2003), esp. 223–334, Sartre (2005) are vital.

how some “Assyrians” (Syrians) at Hierapolis-Manbog adopted Greek stories about Dionysos. So they accredited the god of wine with founding their temple while trekking to India. They even believed that Dionysos had raised two big stone phalli in its precinct. Lucian states that other “Assyrians” at the city borrowed Greek versions of Near Eastern flood myths, like that of Noah’s ark. So they claimed that Deucalion had established the city’s temple after surviving a massive deluge in a boat.⁶⁴ In such ways, Lucian shows how Syrians could comprehend their past by adopting Greek beliefs. They could also express Syrian identities through Greek culture.

Even works written in Near Eastern languages felt the impact of Greek traditions. At Edessa, a disciple of the Christian thinker Bardaisan wrote a Platonic dialogue in Syriac c. 225. In this work, the figure of Bardaisan comments on the affairs of Indians and Kushans of central Asia. But he relies on tropes that circulated in Greek texts.⁶⁵ At some point, the Syriac *Letter of Mara bar Serapeion* trafficked in Stoic philosophy.⁶⁶ The Christian *Oration of ps. Meliton*, surviving in Syriac, bridges the religious worlds of the Roman Empire, its Greek polities, and the Near East.⁶⁷ Mosaics from Syriac-speaking Upper Mesopotamia often featured Greek themes, such as Orpheus with animals, Achilles playing a lyre with Patroklos, and Prometheus’s invention of humanity.⁶⁸ We have already learned how such themes adorned the mosaics and frescoes of Zenobia’s Palmyra.

So Zenobia’s views on her Syrian past were probably shaped by Greek literature too. We will later encounter, in Chapter 8, how Zenobia may have modeled herself on Semiramis, an ancient Assyrian queen. According to Lucian, some “Assyrians” at Hierapolis-Manbog accredited her with founding their temple.⁶⁹ But as we will see, Semiramis was largely a Greek invention, even if loosely based on a real Assyrian queen. Like Lucian’s “Assyrians,” Zenobia would have learned about Semiramis from Greek mythographers and historians. Greek intellectual life

⁶⁴ Lucian, *DDS* 11–16. Lightfoot (2003) 335–72; Andrade (2013) 288–314, (2014).

⁶⁵ *Book of the Laws of the Countries*, in Drijvers (1965) 42, 46, 60, Ramelli (2009) 179, 182, 196–98, with *BNJ* 719, F1–4. Biffi (2011); Andrade (2015).

⁶⁶ *Letter of Mara bar Serapeion*, in Cureton (1855). Merz and Tielemann (2012).

⁶⁷ *Oration of ps. Meliton* in Cureton (1855). Lightfoot (2007).

⁶⁸ Drijvers and Healey (1999) Am6–7, Cm3 and 11, Pl. 52–53, 66, 72; Healey (2006); Bowersock (2001, 2006) 36–38; Balty and Briquel-Chatonnet (2000).

⁶⁹ Lucian, *DDS* 14, 39–40; Lightfoot (2003) 351–57.

certainly had an impact on her. We can also detect her engagement with Jewish and Christian intellectuals while ruler of Palmyra.

Health and Hygiene

According to late Roman hagiography, a buffoonish monk named Symeon and a deacon named John decided to relax in the bath complex at Emesa. John was offended when Symeon removed his cloak and bound it to his head like a turban. Once naked, Symeon found ways to appall his companion even more:

Now, two baths were beside each other, one for men and the other for women. The Fool avoided the one for men and deliberately hastened toward the one for women. Master John then shouted to him, “Where are you going, fool? Wait—that one is for women!” Turning back, the wondrous man says to him, “Come on, you idiot. Hot and cold (water) is there, and hot and cold is here. And there is nothing at all strange either there or here.” At a run he entered among the women as though to the Lord of Glory. But they all rushed at him, and beating him, they dragged him out.⁷⁰

The episode informs. We learn that the Palmyrenes’s neighbors at Emesa bathed publicly into the 6th century. Women participated too but in their own space.⁷¹

Through this episode we can glimpse Zenobia’s hygienic world. Evidence for it is sparse. Some funerary portraits commemorate doctors.⁷² But midwives, nurses, and people schooled in a variety of local remedies perhaps did much medicinal work.⁷³ One wonders how Zenobia kept clean. She perhaps took part in public bathing. We have already seen how a woman named Thomallachis donated 2500 denarii for the baths of Aglibol and Malakbel. She presumably used them. The so-called “Baths of Diocletian” were an option too. Contemporary Jews

⁷⁰ Leontius, *Symeon the Holy Fool*, 148–49, in Festugière (1974) 82–83. See Krueger (1996), esp. 153–54.

⁷¹ Eliav (2000) 443, (2010) 617.

⁷² *IGLS* 17.1.512; *PAT* 0044–50 (esp. 48–50), 874, 1218, 1558: doctors (‘sy’). Smith (2013) 108; Cussini (2017) 89–91.

⁷³ Laes (2011) 57–75.

found ways to accommodate Roman styles of bathing. The Palmyrenes could too.⁷⁴ We have seen how elite houses at Palmyra could lack waterworks and have washbasins instead. Women and men presumably bathed in public at different times or in separate quarters, as they did at late antique Emesa. We can infer that young Zenobia followed this pattern, as both a maiden and, later, as a married matron.

Public bathing may have elicited social tensions. Among the Greeks, nude men attended the gymnasium. Roman baths often attracted nude clientele too. We know that Palmyra had gymnastic life and public baths. But Near Eastern peoples often harbored aversions to public nudity.⁷⁵ Some sculptures and paintings feature nudes at Palmyra,⁷⁶ but these are fairly scarce. Moreover, feminine modesty demanded that honorable women conceal their private parts. Some Roman women bathed in the nude. But others wrapped themselves in towels or wore two-piece swimsuits.⁷⁷ Zenobia probably attended the baths with some sort of clothing.

Palmyrene men perhaps glimpsed the maiden Zenobia at the baths. But they had to be careful. Zenobia was a woman of status. Any men in her life were obligated to protect her honor. Such dispositions were widespread among ancient Greeks, Romans, and Near Eastern peoples. Arabian customs had bearing too. The attitudes of these men were patriarchal. But their concerns were pragmatic. Zenobia's household had plans for her sex life. We now turn to Zenobia at the threshold of marriage.

Marriage and Family Politics

According to the *Historia Augusta*, once married Zenobia exerted tremendous control over her sex life:

Her [Zenobia's] chastity reportedly was such that she knew her own husband only to attempt conception. For after sleeping with him once, she waited for menstruation and withheld herself in case she was pregnant. If not, she gave him the power to try for children again.⁷⁸

⁷⁴ Eliav (2000, 2010).

⁷⁵ Sartre (2008) 40.

⁷⁶ Kaizer (2000) 225; (2010b) 26–27; Colledge (1976), Figs. 36, 131, 133, 135.

⁷⁷ Eliav (2000) 445.

⁷⁸ HA TT 30.12–13.

In its usual way, the *Historia Augusta* endows Zenobia with what Romans would have construed as a manly form of autonomy. Her views on sex prevailed over those of Odainath. We do not know whether this is true. But despite its limitations, the *Historia Augusta* invites us to contemplate marriage at Palmyra.⁷⁹ Let's explore Zenobia's marital options.

Sometime in the early or mid-250s, Zenobia began to approach womanhood. This marked an important point her life. No longer a child, she could conceive. Her community now recognized her as a maiden. But it did not yet deem her a mature woman. She had not breached the threshold of pregnancy and childbirth.⁸⁰ So Zenobia's family contemplated a husband for her. It may have done so already.

Unlike some peoples of Arabia, Palmyrenes were monogamous. Nearly all of them are only associated with one spouse in the inscriptions. Some are recorded as having two wives or husbands. But these had arguably remarried.⁸¹ As Zenobia approached marital age, she expected to have one husband.

Sometimes scholars posit that Palmyrenes practiced mut'a marriage. This Arabian custom involved a temporary marriage for procreation. When the marriage ended, women left their husbands' household and kept custody and jural authority over their children. This is attested in later Roman and Islamic sources.⁸² At Palmyra, some funerary images that depict women and their children, but no fathers, have been linked to this custom.⁸³ The *Historia Augusta*'s portrayal of Zenobia's and Odainath's sex life has also been so linked.

The basis for mut'a marriage, however, is weak. Other factors could explain why people who made funerary portraits did not mention fathers. Relatives from the natal households of women could have omitted their husbands. Palmyrenes may have thought it unnecessary to specify fathers whose children were buried with him.⁸⁴ Roman law and its impact on local society are worth considering too. Roman jurists did not recognize certain stable unions as legal marriages. They therefore conceived of the offspring that they produced as legally

⁷⁹ Smith (2013) 92–95 treats.

⁸⁰ Harlow and Laurence (2002) 54–64.

⁸¹ *IGLS* 17.1.402; *PAT* 0644 (=Dentzer-Feydy and Teixidor (1993) no. 168); p. 65, n. 38. Yon (2001) 175–78 discusses this matter.

⁸² Ammianus, 14.4.14. Smith (1903) 79–88; Hoyland (2001) 131–32.

⁸³ Finlayson (2003–2004) 231, (2008) 119. One cited relief is that of Nabbai, daughter of Ašbar. Finlayson (2008) 132–33, Fig. 6.10; Tanabe (1986) no. 352, with Yon (2013) no. 46.

⁸⁴ Krag and Raja (2016) 143–44.

fatherless.⁸⁵ Slaves could not marry or transmit property to recognized heirs.⁸⁶ Before the 3rd century, Roman soldiers who resided, tarried, or enlisted in Palmyra's vicinity could not marry legally either.⁸⁷ It is not clear whether discharged veterans sometimes had their children recognized as their legal offspring retroactively. Preceding the reign of Septimius Severus, they perhaps could only have legitimate offspring after discharge. Some Palmyrenes name military men as fathers in inscriptions.⁸⁸ But the children of Roman soldiers were often "fatherless." So in various parts of the Roman Empire, civil documents and funerary inscriptions could treat certain children as if they had no fathers.⁸⁹ This would explain why some Palmyrene funerary portraits or inscriptions only identify mothers.⁹⁰ For some reason, it seems, their children did not have legal fathers in the eyes of the Palmyrene community.

To a certain degree, the argument for mut'a marriage is based on a misunderstanding. Inscribed funerary portraits for a woman named Ammai and her son, Abdnergal, were placed in the same tomb. Their inscriptions mention no father for Abdnergal. The inscription on Ammai's portrait reads: "Ammai, freedwoman (*brt ḥry*) of Zebida, foster-mother (or tutor/nurse: *mrbyt*) of Bareiki, (son of) Bara." But it has been misread as "Ammai, daughter of Hari, son of Zebida, wet nurse of Bareiki, (son of) Bara." So some believe that Ammai bore her son in mut'a marriage. A prominent matriarchal relation to the tomb's founders, she would have become the wet-nurse to one of their descendants.⁹¹

But Ammai's funerary inscription, when translated correctly, shows that she was a freedwoman of the father of the tomb's founder (or of the founder's wife). The name of her son, Abdnergal, was indeed common

⁸⁵ Dixon (1992) 90–94; Grubbs (2002) 143–60 (esp. 150–54).

⁸⁶ Dixon (1992) 124–26; Grubbs (2002) 143–48.

⁸⁷ Dixon (1992) 124–26; Grubbs (2002) 158–60; Phang (2001) 306–20. *IGLS* 17.1.9–11, 70–71, 102, 118–119, 133, 169–71, 199–200, 204–13, 301–3, 450, 484–93; *PAT* 0045, 0071, 0649: soldiers at Palmyra. Yon (2001) 274: Palmyrenes in the army.

⁸⁸ *IGLS* 17.1.133. Perhaps *PAT* 0045, 71; Yon (2013) nos. 54–55. Pollard (2000) 152–59.

⁸⁹ Bagnall and Frier (1994) 154–59: *apatores* in Egypt; Rawson (1989) 32–33: Latin *spurii*.

⁹⁰ Yon (2001) 176. *CIS* 2.3.4548, Pl. 60 (= *PAT* 0909) specifies both parents and may identify the mother's tribe (or daughter's through either parent). *PAT* 1041 = *SFP* no. 74, Fig. 144, ostensibly names a child's mother and maternal grandfather.

⁹¹ Finlayson (2008) 119–21 (esp. 120), with (1998) 1.180–96 (emphasizing the status of wet-nurse). Inscriptions are *PAT* 2694–95 (= *SFP* nos. 140–41, Figs. 80, 167). For meaning of *mrbyh* (feminine)/*mrbyn* (masculine), see Cussini (2012) 163–64 and (2016) 49–50. The inscription was not translated correctly in *SFP* no. 141.

among slaves at Palmyra.⁹² It is also better to understand her as a foster mother for a relative of her former owner.⁹³ Palmyrenes sometimes interred manumitted slaves and foster mothers in their tombs.⁹⁴ Since Ammai was a former slave, her son was probably “fatherless” because his father had been a slave. Or he may have been the progeny of his mother’s master. If so, he had been his father’s slave, not his legal son.

Altogether, mut’a marriage at Palmyra has no explicit support in Palmyrene inscriptions or material culture. Even so, some scholars have linked Zenobia’s reported control over sexual congress and her assumption of household authority after Odainath’s death to mut’a marriage.⁹⁵ But mut’a marriage was not necessary for either of these. When it came time for Zenobia to marry, she and her guardians were vetting a suitor whose household she would join. She was to bear children for him.

Zenobia probably had some control over whom she married. Modern Bedouin only rarely force a marriage entirely against the bride’s will. But her family had strategic considerations.⁹⁶ They perhaps vetted her father’s immediate relatives. Palmyrenes sometimes matched paternal cousins or uncles and nieces, just as modern Bedouin have done. These endogamous practices ensured the circulation of property and promoted solidarity within patrilineal bloodlines.⁹⁷ The extended family members interred in the famous Tomb of Elahbel (Fig. 7.2*) engaged in such strategies.⁹⁸ Among modern Bedouin, married couples most often share a common patrilineal grandfather.⁹⁹ But Zenobia and her parents surely looked farther afield, even beyond their tribe, as other Palmyrenes did.¹⁰⁰ Above all, they desired a husband with wealth, social connections, and reputation.

We cannot affirm whether Zenobia and Odainath were remotely related. But his marriage to an elite woman afforded certain political advantages. Odainath was also presumably impressed by Zenobia’s

⁹² Yon (2001) 186–87, with Stark (1971) 42.

⁹³ Cussini (2016) 49–50.

⁹⁴ Smith (2013) 106. *PAT* 1220, 1894, and 1896. See also p. 77, nn. 144–46.

⁹⁵ For this argument, see Finlayson (2008) 122–23.

⁹⁶ Lancaster (1997) 54–60.

⁹⁷ Smith (2013) 94–95.

⁹⁸ Yon (2001) 178–80 and 279, Smith (2013) 94–95 (Elahbel). *PAT* 0486–510, esp. 497, 498, 500, 501, 505, 507 (*IGLS* 407–21 contains the Greek/bilingual inscriptions).

⁹⁹ Lancaster (1997) 36–57 for patterns and vetting.

¹⁰⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.12 and 535; *PAT* 0168. Smith (2013) 92–95 treats marriage strategies.

personal qualities. She was surely intelligent and charismatic. If the *Historia Augusta* is accurate, Zenobia was a formidable rider and hunter and an astounding beauty.¹⁰¹ Odainath, who already had one son, wanted more legitimate children and heirs. Zenobia had just reached child-bearing age. So she became the matron of Odainath's house (*byt*).¹⁰²

We know little about marriage contracts and wedding ceremonies at Palmyra. How courtship worked is uncertain. Presumably, Zenobia's family offered a substantial dowry. Despite some speculations linking the residence to the "baths of Diocletian," where Odainath's household dwelled is unclear.¹⁰³ But we know that Zenobia's wedding marked a key transition in her life. By her late teens, Zenobia had entered into marriage. She was soon to be a mother.

¹⁰¹ *HA* TT 15.7–8; 30.14–19.

¹⁰² See p. 69, nn. 74–76 on households and their locations.

¹⁰³ Hartmann (2001) 202–3; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 55, 110; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 124–25 discuss this.

PART III

Rising Star

6

Marital Household

In 258 or so, Zenobia bore Wahballath.¹ We know little about Zenobia's pregnancy and birthing. The sources are silent on whether these events went smoothly. We cannot even be sure how many children she had. We will return to this issue later in this chapter.

What we do know is that Zenobia was in danger when she had her son. Ancient medicine offered little that deterred disease. It strained to stop hemorrhages. Odds were good that Zenobia would not survive labor. We often wonder whether Palmyrene women commemorated by funerary portraits died in childbirth. But Zenobia was resilient and lucky. She lived.

When Zenobia bore Wahballath, her husband, Odainath, was Palmyra's ruler. Her union with him had a huge impact on her life. But the sources say little about their relationship. Only the *Historia Augusta* says anything at all. But we still have much to explore. We will contemplate how she navigated marriage, childbirth, property ownership, and death. But first let's learn about Zenobia's husband.

Odainath's Background

In 252, a friend of Odainath had a statue of him placed along the Great Colonnade. Its bilingual inscriptions boasted:

¹ Wahballath was still in minority when Zenobia seized power in 268. Zenobia was probably 15–20 when she gave birth to him. Equini Schneider (1993) 32; Southern (2008) 4; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 87. See p. 59, n. 1.

Greek	Septimius Odainathos, son of Hairan, son of Wahballath, [son of Nasor], most illustrious [exarch] of the Palmyrenes. Iulius Aurelius Atheakobos, son of Ogelos, son of Zabdiboles, son of Mokimos who is also Kora, (honors) his friend, in affection. The year 563, the month Xandikos.
Palmyrenean	The image of Septimius [Odainath, son of Hairan], son of Wahballath, (son of) Nasor, illustrious leader (<i>rš</i>) of [Tadmor], which Ate‘aqab, son of Ogeilu, son of Zabdibol, son of Moqimu, who is called Qora, his friend, made for him in their honor, during his command. In the month Nisan, the year 563. ²

These inscriptions are vital for establishing Odainath’s status in Palmyra in the early 250s. He had become its chief military figure, its “exarch” or “leader” (Greek: *exarchos*; Palmyrenean: *rš*). He was also a Roman senator. As we will learn, his status was recognized by his fellow Palmyrenes and the Roman imperial court. Honors received by Odainath’s son, Herodian Hairan, also provide information. Six months earlier, a client had a statue of him placed along the Great Colonnade. Its inscription states that Hairan, too, was a senator and “exarch” or “leader” of the Palmyrenes.³ By the early 250s, Odainath’s position as Palmyra’s leader was secure, and he conceived of it as hereditary.⁴ But he was not yet “king.” Soon we will learn why.

Odainath held his titles at a turbulent time. The Romans had suffered many reversals against the Persians in the prior decade. The emperor Decius had recently died, and the Persians were soon to invade Syria again. Mobile peoples north-northwest of the Black Sea that Roman Greeks called “Scythians” were about to raid the Balkans and Anatolia. A civil war would soon kill Decius’s successor. In 248, an Emesene named Iotapianus staged a brief rebellion in Syria and declared himself emperor.⁵ A few years later, a rogue civic councilor at Antioch named Mariades would ravage north Syria and Cappadocia, before

² *IGLS* 17.1.54. Also *PAT* 2753. **Appendix 3**, 1b–c.

³ *IGLS* 17.1.58. **Appendix 3**, 1d.

⁴ Hartmann (2001) 86–102 (esp. 102 for “Herrscherdynastie”).

⁵ Potter (1990) 39–40, 248–49.

fleeing to Persia.⁶ Amid the turbulence, the Roman imperial court rewarded dynasts who showed signs of loyalty. It was better to empower and ingratiate them than to face rebellion and alignment with Persia. Iotapianus and Mariades had embodied these threats. In Odainath's case, the strategy worked. Odainath and the Roman court forged a relationship that lasted decades.

Odainath was born in about 215.⁷ But the world that he entered was changing fast. By the time he died (c. 268), his Roman Empire scarcely resembled that of his birth. Decades of civil war, military disaster, and imperial usurpation had prevented the imperial court from controlling the empire's vast expanses. Regional dynasts and generals filled the vacuum. In western Europe, a Roman general named Postumus proclaimed himself emperor in 260. He and his successors governed for over a decade. Odainath came to rule much of the Roman Near East. But as we will see, he claimed to govern on the imperial court's behalf. So the political shifts of the 3rd century made his career; they also would kill him.

In the past, some conceived of Odainath as two people: an elder and a younger. The *Continuator Dionis* distinguishes between the two.⁸ Some have posited that the elder governed earlier in the 3rd century, while the younger was Zenobia's husband.⁹ A long-known tomb inscription commemorating Odainath has even been ascribed to the elder.¹⁰ But most no longer accept this position. Various inscriptions commemorating Odainath date securely to the 250s–260s. They ascribe to him the same exact lineage as the Odainath in the tomb inscription: Odainath, son of Hairan, son of Wahballath, son of Nasor. The simplest explanation is that the Odainath of these inscriptions was one person.¹¹ The younger “Odainath” depicted by the *Continuator Dionis* was probably Odainath's son Wahballath but misnamed.¹² We will revisit him later in this chapter.

⁶ TSO 89–102. Potter (1990) 274–83; Hartmann (2006a).

⁷ Odainath's date of birth can be inferred only in rough outline. His son Herodian Hairan was apparently mature by the early 260s and living in the 240s. See p. 120, nn. 50–54. Odainath's first marriage probably occurred c. 240. If he was in his twenties then, he was born c. 210–220. Likewise, see Gawlikowski (2010b) 467; Sommer (2017) 155.

⁸ FHG 4.195.

⁹ Schlumberger (1942–1943a) 48, (1942–1943b), App. 4; Balty (2005) 337.

¹⁰ IGLS 17.1.545.

¹¹ Gawlikowski (1985), (2007a); Hartmann (2001) 108–12; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 271–73.

¹² FHG 4.195. For the younger Odainath as Wahballath, see Gawlikowski (1985) 259; Stoneman (1992) 108; Kienast (1996) 239; Hartmann (2001) 229; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 272. See also p. 148, n. 29.

We know nothing explicit about Odainath's father and his childhood household.¹³ But family members acquired Roman citizenship and presumably served as civic councilors under the Roman emperor Septimius Severus.¹⁴ One source identifies Odainath as a *decurio Palmyrenus* (a civic councilor at Palmyra).¹⁵ Odainath's natal household certainly belonged to Palmyra's military elite, and this status would propel his rise to power.¹⁶ As a youth, he became an expert at archery, horsemanship, and hunting. Once mature, he engaged in the military ventures that protected Palmyra's caravans. In his later twenties or so, he married his first wife. His son Hairan, also eventually known as Herodian, was born sometime afterward. Zenobia was born about this time too.

The 3rd-Century Transformation

Shapur I had a long, remarkable reign as the Persian "king of kings." The son of the Sasanian dynasty's founder, he won a series of sterling victories over his Roman foe. He even resettled captives in Persian territory, especially in Khuzistan and Fars. A trilingual inscription at his burial site near Bishapur in Iran commemorates his achievements in Middle Persian, Parthian, and Greek. According to one part:

In the far-side region of Carrhae and Edessa, we waged a great battle with Valerian Caesar. We took power over Valerian Caesar and the rest—the prefect, senators, and generals who commanded that army—with our own hands. We took power over them all into our hands and brought them out to Persis.¹⁷

So did Shapur boast of defeating and capturing the Roman emperor Valerian. But it was not empty propaganda. In 260,¹⁸ Shapur had inflicted on the Roman Empire one of its most humiliating defeats. He captured Valerian near Carrhae in Upper Mesopotamia. Valerian remained at

¹³ Agathias, 4.24.4 even calls Odainath *aphanēs* and *agnostos*.

¹⁴ Gawlikowski (2010b) 467–70. Hartmann (2001) 88–90 suggests that Odainath's grandfather was a Roman citizen.

¹⁵ Festus, *Brev.* 23.

¹⁶ Sommer (2008, 2015a, 2016a), (2017) 218–22; Gawlikowski (2010b) 467.

¹⁷ *ŠKZ* 22 in Huyse (1999). I translate the Greek version here.

¹⁸ This is the widely accepted date: Hartmann (2001) 129–41 (esp. 131). Yet, see Gawlikowski (2007a) 302–5, (2010b) 470.

Shapur's court until he died. His son, Gallienus, lived in infamy for his failure to rescue his father.

Rising from the ashes of catastrophe, Odainath revived the Roman East. He was Palmyra's uncontested ruler at the time. But throughout the 260s, he fought against the Sasanian Persians with a tenacity and acumen that Roman emperors had not shown in decades. His victories over Shapur's armies brought him to the Persian stronghold of Ctesiphon. They earned him universal acclaim throughout the Roman Empire. Shapur could accomplish little against his greatest Roman rival. The long list of achievements inscribed at his burial site in the 260s tells the story. So do the accompanying reliefs. Shapur boasted of killing Gordian III in 244 (deceptively, as Gordian was probably killed by his own troops).¹⁹ He narrated how Philip the Arab had to purchase peace from him afterward.²⁰ He celebrated how his armies laid waste to Roman Syria, deported its residents, and captured Valerian.²¹ His reliefs depicted a parade of Roman captives. They also showed him trampling one emperor, receiving submission from another, and abducting a third.²² But Shapur made no mention of Odainath.²³ That was the best that he could do.

Odainath's Roman Empire was a state of shifting sands. Between the reigns of Severus Alexander (d. 235) and Diocletian (285–305), it witnessed a series of civil wars, frontier breaches, and imperial usurpations.²⁴ So severe was the political instability that the Roman Empire split into three fragments. Each came to be governed by its own imperial Augusti. The extent of economic stagnation and the question of whether the period was one of "crisis" have been debated. The effects of instability varied in time and place.²⁵ The frontier regions of Europe and the Middle East were hit hardest.²⁶ But the empire's political problems were serious and real. Roman emperors struggled to provide stable governance, prevent civil war, and protect their frontiers. They failed to

¹⁹ ŠKZ 7 in Huyse (1999). Potter (2014) 231–32 on Gordian's death.

²⁰ ŠKZ 8 in Huyse (1999).

²¹ ŠKZ 9–31 in Huyse (1999).

²² Herrmann (1980) Fig. 1, Pl. 4.

²³ Huyse (1999) 10–14 dates Shapur's inscription to 260–62 but only because it omits Odainath.

²⁴ Key works are Potter (2014); Southern (2015); Hekster (2008); Hekster et al. (2007); Ando (2012); Mennen (2011); Esmonde Cleary (2013) 18–41. This section's narrative of 3rd-century politics is derived from these and others cited below.

²⁵ Witschel (1999, 2004).

²⁶ Hekster (2008) 31–45 discusses issues and scholarship.

establish dynastic legitimacy, and they also strained to control the civil and military resources needed to ensure order. Serious economic and demographic stagnation afflicted many regions. The Roman state lacked precious metals for its coinage.²⁷ Trade with places beyond imperial territories regressed.²⁸ The century would end with a “restored” empire that was dramatically different from the empire that had existed at its beginning. When Odainath was born, the shift was brewing. He only knew an unstable and changing empire. So did Zenobia.

A maelstrom of enduring factors made the instability possible. By the time of Odainath’s maturity and Zenobia’s birth, the instability was exerting its devastating force. One factor was military expenses. Septimius Severus increased military stipends. He also annexed Upper Mesopotamian territories in 195–197. His activity enlarged the eastern frontier. Additional legions and corresponding auxiliary units were recruited to defend it. These had to be paid.²⁹ So the Roman Empire’s fiscal burdens became larger. They encouraged the debasement of coinage that the period witnessed.³⁰

Worse still, new emperors now routinely gave their soldiers a cash bonus. This custom strained the empire’s supplies of coined money. It also gave soldiers incentive to kill emperors who did not pay them.³¹ As emperors struggled to establish dynastic legitimacy, officers and soldiers aligned with onsite commanders against absent emperors, or even against present emperors who displeased them. So from 235 to 285, a spate of violent usurpations was hatched and executed. A horde of upstart generals waged civil war between 249 and 253. They killed the emperors Philip (249) and Gallus (253). They also killed one another. The tally was grim. Civil wars and coups killed more emperors than Goths or Persians. In 253, amid the bloodletting, Valerian became emperor. Shapur I defeated and captured him in 260. But even so, Valerian’s reign was longer than most.

In the tumult, the Sasanian Empire loomed large. In 224, the Persian notable Ardashir overthrew the Parthian dynasty and incrementally seized its satrapies (regions governed by magistrates) and client

²⁷ Hekster et al. (2007); Witschel (1999, 2004).

²⁸ Nappo (2007); Sidebotham (2011) 259–60.

²⁹ Hekster (2008) 36–40; Southern (2015) 46–47; Potter (1990) 7–10, (2014) 125–26, 130–31.

³⁰ Hekster (2008) 31–36; Southern (2015) 433–36; Potter (2014) 130, 138.

³¹ Potter (1990) 7–51 for this premise and what follows.

kingdoms. He initiated a successful invasion of Roman Mesopotamia in the late 230s, capturing Hatra in 240.³² The Romans finally launched a serious counterattack in 243, but it ended with the death of Gordian III. Ardashir's son and successor, Shapur I (240–270), like his father, was a Zoroastrian. Reportedly handpicked by the god of light (Ahura Mazda) to govern, he claimed legitimate rule over both “Iranians” and “non-Iranians” (including Romans).³³ So he, too, would initiate serious offensives into Roman territory during his long reign. Meanwhile, the Romans had to deal with civil wars and frontier breaches elsewhere. In a move presaging the future powers of Odainath, the emperor Philip gave his brother Priscus consular authority over Syria and Mesopotamia (*hypateia*). He then made him *rector Orientis* (ruler of the East) in 248 CE.³⁴ Peace was restored at great monetary and political expense.³⁵ Civil papyri from Upper Mesopotamia show that imperial and municipal governance was active.³⁶

But the situation remained unstable in the East. The Emesene Iotapianus staged his revolt in Syria, just as Priscus became *rector Orientis*. The Antiochene notable Mariades wreaked havoc in north Syria and Cappadocia before fleeing to Persia in 251. Then in 252 or 253, Shapur launched an invasion that overran Syria and southern Anatolia.³⁷ In response to the disaster, a Syrian forger of oracles lamented: “I now mourn miserably for you, wretched Syria.” But despite pretending to predict the future, he apparently did not see that worse was coming.³⁸ Shapur's invasion was followed by attacks against Roman frontier forts. Using poisoned gases, elaborate mining, and potent siege tactics, the Persians captured Dura-Europos in 256 or so.³⁹ Then in 260, Shapur won his dramatic victory over Valerian and invaded Syria and southern Anatolia again. But the Palmyrenes maintained some local stability. During twenty years of frontier breaches and humiliated emperors, Odainath

³² Hauser (2013); Isaac (2013); Southern (2008) 40.

³³ Potter (2014) 213–23; Daryaei (2009) 3–10; Payne (2016) 211–12.

³⁴ *ILS* 9005 = *CIL* 3.14149 = *IGLS* 15.429; *P. Euphrat.* 1. Also *IGR* 3.1201–2 = *IGLS* 15.427–28. Potter (1990) 245–46; Southern (2008) 40–41.

³⁵ Potter (2014) 232–34; Southern (2008) 41.

³⁶ *P. Euphrat.* in Feissel and Gascou (1995), (2000); Feissel, Gascou, and Teixidor (1997).

³⁷ Hartmann (2001) 73; Barnes (2009) date the invasion to 253. Yet, see Potter (2014) 244–45, 625, n. 142.

³⁸ *TSO* 119. The writer was active between Shapur's two invasions (252 and 260). See p. 138, n. 169.

³⁹ James (2011) 295–317.

was securing his status as Palmyra's leading dynast. Zenobia was growing to womanhood.

Meanwhile, the Roman frontiers along the Rhine and Danube endured increased incursions. The identities of the invaders are often hard to decipher. The contemporary historian Dexippus, like many Roman Greeks, called the eastern ones "Scythian." To the west, figures often identified as Franks, Iuthungi, or Alamanni menaced.⁴⁰ The attacks consumed ample imperial resources. In 251, an invasion of "Scythians," probably Carpi and Goths, killed the emperor Decius. In 252, they were raiding Asia Minor by ship. A few years later a Roman army caught the plague while confronting them there. In 258 and 260, the Alamanni and Iuthungi breached as far as north Italy. Goths raided Greece in the early 260s.⁴¹ In 268–269, "Scythians" (apparently the Herulians) overran the Balkans, boarded ships, and raided Asia Minor and Greece. They even sacked Athens. Meanwhile, the emperor Gallienus had his hands full with the schismatic Gallic Empire and the usurper Aureolus.⁴² He could do little.

Gallienus had succeeded his captive father Valerian in 260. But his magisterial reach was compromised. While he confronted one usurper after another, generals and dynasts increasingly managed parts of the empire. In 260, Postumus's troops acclaimed him emperor in Gaul.⁴³ Adept at defending the Rhine from invaders, he came to govern a "Gallic" empire. Its emperors would bear the mantle of Roman governance in France, Britain, and Spain until 274. The emperor who conquered them was Aurelian. He would overwhelm Zenobia too.

The other splinter empire that took shape was Zenobia's. But its breach with the Roman court was not as sudden. Odainath may have set the stage for its autonomy. But he communicated his loyalty to the Roman imperial court in palpable ways. He never severed ties.⁴⁴ We will soon explore the career of Odainath. But first, we must contemplate a vexing issue: his children by Zenobia.

⁴⁰ Potter (2014) 239–53; Southern (2015) 348–65; Hekster (2008) 11–31, inform the following.

⁴¹ Mallan and Davenport (2015) 215–20.

⁴² Potter (2014) 259–60.

⁴³ Potter (2014) 252–53, 257–58.

⁴⁴ For Zenobia's realm as "Teilreich," which in many respects governs my overall interpretation of the activity of Odainath and Zenobia, see Hartmann (2001), esp. 427–66, (2008).

Marriage and Children

Only the *Historia Augusta* speaks at length about Zenobia's children. But its account is misleading and inconsistent. Let's take two quotations as examples:

In fact, a foreigner (*peregrina*) named Zenobia, about whom much has been stated already . . . governed on behalf of her sons Herennianus and Timolaus.⁴⁵

I judge it also to be on topic that Zenobia exercised governance as she did on behalf of her son Wahballath, not Timolaus and Herennianus.⁴⁶

The problems of these accounts are evident. The *Historia Augusta* states here, and in numerous other places, that Zenobia governed for her sons Herennianus and Timolaus. But in one instance it tells us that she governed for Wahballath, not Herennianus and Timolaus. Even stranger, it devotes space to short biographies of Herennianus and Timolaus.⁴⁷ But Wahballath does not receive a biography despite being Odainath's actual successor. The *Historia Augusta* only mentions him the one time.

How many children Zenobia bore is also a confusing matter.⁴⁸ The sources are erratic. The number that they suggest is high. Scholarly error has added at least one other child. If we tally each child who has appeared in ancient sources or modern scholarship, the total is as much as seven or eight. It is sometimes reckoned possible (if unlikely) that Zenobia had so many children. This would imply that she was continually pregnant between roughly 258 and 268, a particularly fertile period of her life. Assuming easy conception, this may have happened. But it would also imply that all or most of the children that Zenobia bore survived infancy and early childhood. So the figure should give us pause. While not impossible, it militates against the constraints imposed by infant and child mortality.⁴⁹ Most Palmyrene funerary sarcophagi display several fewer children. The infant burials at Palmyra, mentioned previously, remind

⁴⁵ HA TT 30.2.

⁴⁶ HA Aur. 38.1–2.

⁴⁷ HA TT 27–28, with Gall. 13.2, TT 15.2, 24.4. Stoneman (1992) 114–15; Hartmann (2001) 125; Southern (2008) 9.

⁴⁸ Gawlikowski (1985), (2007a), (2011), (2016a); Hartmann (2001) 108–28; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 84–88; Southern (2008) 7–10 provide judicious treatments.

⁴⁹ D'Ambra (2007) 84; Laes (2011) 30–32; Southern (2008) 10.

us of what women like Zenobia faced. Above all, the *Historia Augusta* seems to have created duplicates of children from Odainath's household.

Odainath's son Herodian Hairan appears in the sources with some variation. Inscriptions usually call him Hairan in Greek or Palmyrenean. An inscription on Palmyra's monumental arch and a tessera piece, both from the 260s, call him Herodian in Greek. An inscribed clay token perhaps calls him Herodes, as does the *Historia Augusta*. Some have conceived of Herodian/Herodes and Hairan as two different sons, perhaps even from different mothers.⁵⁰ Both names never appear in the same inscription.⁵¹ But double names were common at Palmyra, and different ones could be invoked in different contexts. Also, the name Herodian only appears in inscriptions dated to the 260s, usually with a royal title. Hairan may have assumed the name Herodian when he became "king of kings."⁵² Most scholars now conclude that Herodian and Hairan were one and the same. By 251 CE, inscriptions celebrated Hairan, like Odainath, as a senator and Palmyra's "exarch" and "leader" (*rš*). He probably was not yet quite mature.⁵³ But he participated, it seems, in Odainath's engagement with the Persians in 260 or his subsequent invasion of Persia (roughly 262–263). Afterward, he was declared "king of kings" along with his father. An inscription on Palmyra's monumental arch (**Fig. 2.7***) celebrated the victory and the coronation of "Herodian."⁵⁴ We can surmise that by then he was mature, or nearly so.

Additional complications arise from the theory that Odainath had two sons named Hairan by different mothers.⁵⁵ But the evidence is tenuous. It consists of a series of inscribed tesserae that have survived in multiple copies. These portray two reclining figures in priestly attire on each side. Inscriptions on the obverse name Odainath and Hairan, and those on the reverse name Odainath and Wahballath. Since no mothers are mentioned, the tesserae are conceivably naming Odainath's two sons

⁵⁰ Gawlikowski (1985, 2007a, 2011, 2016a), the last including the Herodes token; Hartmann (2001) 112–16; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 271–73; Equini Schneider (1993) 23 discuss as one person. Kotula (1997) 105–6; Balty (2005) 337–38; Potter (1990) 381–87, (2014) 628–29 distinguish Hairan from Herodian. For "Herodian" in inscriptions, *IGLS* 17.1.61 and p. 134, nn. 143–44.

⁵¹ *IGLS* 17.1.58–61; **Appendix 3**, 1d, 2g–h, 3b.

⁵² Sommer (2017) 160.

⁵³ *IGLS* 17.1.58; **Appendix 3**, 1d. Sommer (2017) 160 treats age.

⁵⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.61, with commentary; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 54–55 for theories of date/context; **Appendix 3**, 3b. Also *HA TT* 16 on Herodes. See p. 134, n. 143.

⁵⁵ Seyrig (1963) 171–72; Potter (1990) 386–88, (2014) 628–29, with references; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 71.

from his different wives.⁵⁶ In the end, we must conclude that Odainath had only one son named Hairan. He was eventually called Herodian and perhaps even Herodes, and he was not Zenobia's son.

The only undisputed child of Zenobia is Wahballath, Odainath's eventual heir and successor. Strangely, no Greek source mentions him by name. But coins, tesserae, and inscriptions leave no doubt as to his maternity.⁵⁷ These provide no support for any other sons. Zosimus apparently believed that Zenobia had only one son for Aurelian to remove from Palmyra.⁵⁸ This was Wahballath. A moment ago, we discovered how only Herodian Hairan and Wahballath appear as Odainath's sons in Palmyra's tesserae.⁵⁹ We should doubt other sons for Odainath or Zenobia. We have already learned how the *Historia Augusta* only identifies Wahballath as Odainath's successor once. It is the only accurate statement that it makes about Zenobia's children. We will encounter Wahballath in chapters to come.

Regarding the other children, the *Historia Augusta* is confusing and inconsistent in its usual way. It repeatedly claims that Zenobia had ruled through two young sons (*parvuli*): Herennianus and Timolaus.⁶⁰ But no other sources corroborate this claim. Its Herennianus is probably derived from Odainath's son Herodian Hairan. Confused by his double names, the *Historia Augusta* (or a source) misconstrued him as two people and glossed "Hairan" as the Latin name Herennianus.⁶¹ So the *Historia Augusta* crafted one biography for "Herodes" (Herodian), rightly attributed to Odainath's first wife and another for "Herennianus" (Hairan), erroneously ascribed to Zenobia.

The figure Timolaus poses similar problems. His existence in the *Historia Augusta* may be a complete fiction.⁶² It also may reflect the confusion of the *Historia Augusta* (or a source), which split Wahballath into

⁵⁶ PAT 2497 (=RTP 736); **Appendix 3**, 5b. Equini Schneider (1993) 23; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 71–72, Fig. 16; Gawlikowski (2016a) 132–33, Fig. 6. Zonaras, 12.24 also implies two sons; Hartmann (2001) 112.

⁵⁷ PAT 0317; ILS 8924=Bauzou (1998) no. 98; **Appendix 3**, 4c, 4f; RIC 5.1 (Aurelian) no. 381, Pl. 9.130–31; RIC 5.2 (Vaballathus) nos. 1–8, Pl. 20.12; Estiot (2004) 116–20, 222–23; Bland (2011). Hartmann (2001) 229; Greek sources.

⁵⁸ Zos. 1.59.1: Ζηνοβίαν τε καὶ τὸν παῖδα τὸν ταύτης. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 183.

⁵⁹ PAT 2497 (=RTP 736). Equini Schneider (1993) 23; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 71–72, Fig. 16; Gawlikowski (2016a) 132–33, Fig. 6.

⁶⁰ Some treat these children as real. See Kotula (1997) 106. But they are probably invented; Stoneman (1992) 114–15; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 85–86, (2016) 183.

⁶¹ Bland (2011) 137, n. 10; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 85–86; Hartmann (2001) 125–26.

⁶² Bland (2011) 137, n. 10; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 85–86, (2016) 183.

two characters: Wahballath and Timolaus.⁶³ How the name Timolaus entered the record is unclear. Some have surmised it to be a Greek and Latin gloss on the Palmyrene name Taimallath.⁶⁴ Whatever the reason, the *Historia Augusta* treats Timolaus as one of Odainath's successors. But it barely mentions Wahballath by name.

Modern scholars have invented a son for Zenobia named Antiochus. But we should strike him from the record. During the early 20th century, certain mutilated milestones commemorating, or believed to commemorate, Wahballath or Zenobia were discovered.⁶⁵ They described Zenobia as "mother of the king." But on one, the name Antiochus appeared after a small lacuna where the stone was damaged. Scholars surmised that the name Septimius had originally appeared in it. So they reckoned that Zenobia was mother of a king named Septimius Antiochus. But the Palmyrenean on another milestone leaves no doubt that the Greek reads "mother of the king, daughter of Antiochus."⁶⁶ Despite the lack of any basis for the son Antiochus, the myth persists in modern scholarship.⁶⁷

Zenobia reportedly had daughters. Zonaras claims that Zenobia had several.⁶⁸ These daughters allegedly married the emperor Aurelian and Roman senators. This is impossible. But some sources communicate that Aurelian settled Zenobia near Rome with her children c. 274.⁶⁹ Along with Wahballath, she must have had at least one. Since Zenobia reportedly married a Roman senator at that time,⁷⁰ she could have had daughters with him. Some descendants certainly lived at Rome.⁷¹ But she probably did not bear more children in her mid- to late thirties. No evidence suggests that she did. Like Wahballath, any daughters came from Odainath's household. Like their mother, some apparently married Roman senators.

So between 258 and 268, Zenobia probably had one to four children who survived their early years. One was Wahballath; any others were daughters. Altogether childbirth and motherhood represented a

⁶³ Kienast (1996) 239.

⁶⁴ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 85; Hartmann (2001) 125–26.

⁶⁵ *PAT* 0317; *OGIS* 650 (= *IGR* 3.1029), with 651; *CIL* 3.6727. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 86–87, 275; Hartmann (2001) 119–20 discuss these inscriptions.

⁶⁶ For inscription, *PAT* 0317; **Appendix 3**, 4c.

⁶⁷ Southern (2008) 5.

⁶⁸ Zonaras, 12.27.

⁶⁹ *HA TT* 30.27; Eutropius, *Brev.* 9.13.2; Jerome, *Chron.* year 274.

⁷⁰ Syncellus, 721 (Mosshammer 470); Zonaras, 12.27.

⁷¹ See p. 209, n. 100. Baldini (1978, 1985), with *CIL* 6.1516 = *ILS* 1202; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 87, (2016) 183.

significant transition in Zenobia's life. Given ancient patterns of demography, she likely suffered the loss of children at birth, infancy, or early childhood. Pregnancy was dangerous for her. But motherhood marked Zenobia as a mature woman and a fully initiated household matron. In funerary portraits, matrons veil their hair with their cloaks and bear symbols of household harmony. Zenobia now had this stature too. So she covered her hair in public. She also managed the domestic servants and the production of household textiles. She fashioned social bonds with the wives from Odainath's circle. Judging from her subsequent rise of power, she established meaningful links with his staff too.

Funerary portraits give us a sense of the bonds that Zenobia forged with her children. Some portray deceased women who are flanked by small children (Fig. 5.3). Others depict women who cradle babies in their arms or breastfeed them.⁷² One can also find likenesses of women who mourn departed children.⁷³ As we will learn, the safety of her children in part inspired Zenobia's bid for political power. It also perhaps made her relocation by Aurelian palatable. But Zenobia did not merely tend to her children and Odainath's household. She was a property owner. She managed her assets independently of Odainath.

Property, Inheritance, and Household Authority

During the 240s or so, two Palmyrene women ceded parts of a tomb that they owned to a man. An inscription on site documented the transaction. A key part reads:

Palmyrenean: . . . Iulia Aurelia Šālmāt, daughter of
Abd'astor, son of Yarhibola and Ummadabu,
freedwoman of Lucius Aurelius Barsamya,
guardian (*mprnsyt'*) of Bonne, son of Rabb'el,
her son, ceded to Iulius Aurelius Malku, son of
Ogeilu. . . .⁷⁴

⁷² Heyn (2010) 646–53 provides a useful catalogue.

⁷³ Heyn (2010) 645–46. Ingholt (1928) 468=CIS 2.3.4421, Pl. 38=PAT 0781, which Finlayson (1998) 1.223–45 identifies as aunt and niece based on headscarves (despite the clear inscription); Ploug (1995)/Hvidberg Hansen (=1998) no. 86 (PAT 0723); Ingholt (1934) 40–42, Pl. 10.1.

⁷⁴ PAT 0095; Cussini (2005a) 35, (2012) 163–64, (2016) 49; Healey (2009) 221.

This inscription points to a vital aspect of social life in Palmyra. Women owned and managed property. They could also be legal guardians of children and households. This distinguished the Palmyrenes from many Greeks and Romans. Roman women could own and inherit property. But Roman law nurtured beliefs in womanly “weakness.”⁷⁵ It typically maintained that men were to oversee how living mothers managed the property of their children. In earlier periods, even women under 25 years of age were to have guardians. Freedwomen still had them in the 3rd century. While women evaded these constraints in practice, they did so despite legal expectations.⁷⁶ Various eastern Roman peoples had similar protocols. A 2nd-century Jewish woman named Babatha, active in Roman Arabia and Palestine, had legal guardians appointed for her son. Babatha’s husband had formal oversight over her property.⁷⁷

But in certain contexts women of the Near East owned property or exercised legal authority over households without any formal oversight. In 243, Marcia Aurelia Matar’ata sold a slave at Edessa in Upper Mesopotamia. Since she was illiterate, her husband signed on her behalf, but he was not her guardian.⁷⁸ A woman near Edessa likewise arranged for her own tomb to be built.⁷⁹ In the mid-3rd century, an upper Mesopotamian widow claimed the right of *ius liberorum* (right of children) by Roman law. Traditionally this law freed the mother of three children from having a guardian for herself. But this form of guardianship was mostly dormant by the 3rd century. By then, the privilege probably carried inheritance benefits, though it still may have curbed persisting restrictions on women who did business.⁸⁰

In the papyri of Dura-Europos, we discover that children had priority of inheritance over other kin. But it was noticeably not granted to sons over daughters.⁸¹ We also encounter married women who owned property, whether alone or in conjunction with others.⁸² A widow of Dura-Europos named Aurelia Marcellina, whom we have met in Chapter 3,

⁷⁵ Grubbs (2002) 51–58.

⁷⁶ Gardner (1986) 149; Grubbs (2002) 23–45, 236–60.

⁷⁷ *P. Yadin* 12–20, 27. On Babatha’s archive, see recently Czajkowski (2017). For other documents, see *XHev/SE* 63–69.

⁷⁸ P1 in Drijvers and Healey (1999) 232–34, Healey (2009) 266.

⁷⁹ Drijvers and Healey (1999) As 20.

⁸⁰ *P. Euphrat.* 15, in Feissel and Gascou (2000); Grubbs (2002) 34–35, 37–43; Sommer (2016b) 64–65.

⁸¹ *P. Dura* 12.

⁸² *P. Dura* 17–18, 29–32.

contributed cash and assets to her dowry when she remarried. This represented only a fraction of her property. Her second husband also contributed to her dowry, which he managed.⁸³ Among the Nabataeans, women noticeably managed tombs and sometimes acted as legal guardians to children, apparently without male oversight.⁸⁴ We have already learned about the jural authority that Bedouin women can wield.

We encounter similar patterns of property owning and guardianship among women of Palmyra. We know from “cession inscriptions” in tombs that they owned property. Wealthy tomb owners often ceded niches to extended family, clients, or customers. So Palmyrenes could own entire tombs or certain burial niches, which they could cede or sell. The “cession inscriptions” probably paraphrased civil documents.⁸⁵ Many transactions involved women sellers and buyers, and those without guardians.

A figure named Iulia Aurelia Bathmalku exemplifies these trends. Around 160, her great-grandfather and his two brothers owned a tomb.⁸⁶ By 241 CE, Bathmalku had become its sole owner and was conferring burial spaces. Her funerary inscriptions label her the “heir” (*wršh*) of her tomb and her household (*byt*).⁸⁷ Her example is not isolated. In 95 CE, two women owned an underground tomb at Palmyra.⁸⁸ In Chapter 4, we have already encountered a freedwoman named Iulia Aurelia Prima. She sold spaces from the tomb of her deceased husband. She had apparently inherited it.⁸⁹ Honorific inscriptions tell a similar story. So a woman named Thomallachis donated 2500 denarii for a sacred bath in 182 CE.⁹⁰ She was apparently the sister and cousin of two men who donated bronze doors to the precinct of Bel in 175.⁹¹ When Julia Aurelia Agge raised honorary statues for her deceased father and brother, she too was handling her money.⁹²

⁸³ *P. Dura* 30. My interpretation is informed by comparisons and contrasts with *P. Yadin* 10, 17–20; *P. Yadin* 37=XHēv/Se 65.

⁸⁴ Healey (1993) H.7, 11–12, 16, 24, 26, 34–35 (with p. 40) for tomb inscriptions.

⁸⁵ Cussini (1995, 2005a, 2010, 2012, 2014, 2016) provides key examination.

⁸⁶ *PAT* 0523–25.

⁸⁷ *PAT* 0527–29, 540; Cussini (2005a) 31–32, (2016) 42.

⁸⁸ *PAT* 2727. Cussini (2005a) 33, (2016) 42, 51.

⁸⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.439; *PAT* 2725; Cussini (2005a) 31, 35–36.

⁹⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.312. Yon (2009a) 99–100.

⁹¹ *IGLS* 17.1.21. See also *PAT* 0061; p. 60, n. 5.

⁹² *IGLS* 17.1.257.

Some Palmyrene women acted as executors for men or legal guardians of households. A certain Šalma sold parts of a tomb on behalf of her husband and a kinsman for 120 denarii.⁹³ But Ummadabu's activity is perhaps most important for how we understand the domestic and imperial authority that Zenobia would one day wield. In a cession inscription, she is described as guardian (*mprnsyt'*) of her son, on whose behalf she apparently sold some tomb space.⁹⁴ This inscription indicates that mothers could sometimes become their households' legal guardians and executors after their husbands had died. The Palmyrenes were not alone in this practice. The ancient Near East knew legal precedents for women exercising such domestic authority, or even government positions.⁹⁵ The legal systems of various eastern Roman peoples did too.⁹⁶ In Asia Minor and Egypt, women could be guardians (*epitropoi*) of their children, while sometimes having a guardian themselves (*kyrios*).⁹⁷ But strictly speaking, Roman law prohibited women from having this legal stature.

We can envision the impact that such Palmyrene practices had on Zenobia. Upon her marriage to Odainath, her parents conferred a dowry.⁹⁸ But Odainath may have contributed too. Otherwise, she controlled the property that she had inherited from her parents. Odainath only managed her dowry. If Zenobia and Odainath had divorced, she would have reclaimed all her property.⁹⁹ When Odainath died in 268, his surviving children were not yet mature. So Zenobia became guardian of his household and executor of his estate. She also became the manager of his realm.

Zenobia enjoyed Odainath's immense property during his lifetime. He surely owned rural holdings in Palmyra's hinterland. Two inscriptions made by a servant (*tly'*) of Odainath in 258 hint at this:

⁹³ PAT 1791; Cussini (1995) 238–40, (2005a) 36, (2016) 43. This inscription is more descriptive of a lost document of sale than most cession inscriptions. For *gnstš* as the Greek *gnostos*, see Brock (2005) 13.

⁹⁴ PAT 0095. Cussini (2005a) 35, (2012) 163–64, (2016) 49; Healey (2009) 221. For the other woman, Šalmat, see p. 64, n. 24 and p. 77, n. 143. The Greek *epitropos*, rendered in Palmyrenean as *ṗṗṗ*, may similarly describe guardians or otherwise a military rank. Yon (2013) nos. 54–55; Brock (2005) 16.

⁹⁵ Justel (2016) 92–93; Svärd (2016) 130–31; Stol (2016) 284–85.

⁹⁶ Grubbs (2002) 242–60.

⁹⁷ Van Bremen (1996) 205–36; Grubbs (2002) 255–58.

⁹⁸ For comparison, pp. 124–25, n. 83.

⁹⁹ *P. Dura*. 31–32 provides comparison.

Palmyrenean: Nebuza, son of Kaftut, servant (*tly'*) of Odainath, illustrious *consularis*, made for his life and that of his sons. He built for Abgal, good god. He made for him this gathering house and the roof for it, the year 569, in the month Adar, day 12, a good year and a day in good.¹⁰⁰

Palmyrenean: Abgal, good god. Nebuza, son of Kaftut, servant (*tly'*) of Odainath, *consularis*, (day) 5 of the month Tebet, [year] 569.¹⁰¹

The provenances of Nebuza's inscriptions are unknown. But Abgal was popular in the hinterland. So they suggest that Nebuza had established a shrine for Abgal near one of Odainath's rural estates. When Odainath died, his surviving children and heirs were still minors. So Zenobia administered Odainath's rural holdings for them.

We have now added a key dimension to our likeness of Zenobia. This is Zenobia as a property holder and, eventually, household guardian. We will later contemplate how she acquired her husband's authority and his base of support. But before we can do this, we will have to define Odainath's political status at the time of his death.

Odainath's Political and Military Career

Earlier, we learned how a servant of Odainath made two religious dedications in 258 CE. In the same year, the gold- and silversmiths of Palmyra honored Odainath with statues on the Great Colonnade. Their inscriptions read as follows:

Greek: Septimius Odainathos, most illustrious [*consularis*], the association of the goldsmiths and silversmiths in honor of their lord. The year 569, the month Xandikos.

¹⁰⁰ Yon (2013) no. 61; Gorea (2007) 162–64.

¹⁰¹ Yon (2013) no. 157.

Palmyrenean: The image of Septimius Odainath, illustrious *consularis*, our lord, which the association of the smith-workers of gold and silver raised for him, in his honor. The month Nisan, the year 569.¹⁰²

We rely on texts like these to establish the titles and powers that Odainath exercised during his career. But not all such inscriptions were made when Odainath was living. In 271, after Odainath's death, Zenobia's generals conferred posthumous honors. According to their inscription:

Palmyrenean: The image of Septimius Odainath, king of kings (*mlk mlk'*) and *mtqnn'* of all the East (*mtqnn' dy mđnh' klh*), the Septimii Zabda, chief of the great army, and Zabbai, chief of the army at Tadmor, *kratistoi*, raised for their lord (*mr*). In the month Ab, the year 582.¹⁰³

The inscription is riveting. It alone describes Odainath as “king of kings” and “*mtqnn'* of all the East.” As we will discover, Odainath's titles and official powers are controversial. But we will try to define what they were anyway.

During his career, Odainath embodied three contemporary trends that typified Roman governance and its instability along the eastern frontier.¹⁰⁴ One was for local dynasts to exercise governance in the lapse of central Roman authority. When Shapur I overran Syria in 252 (or 253), an Emesene named Uranius organized his city's defenses and then briefly proclaimed himself emperor.¹⁰⁵ Odainath would act similarly after 260 but without asserting himself as an emperor. Another pattern was for the Roman court to confer imperial titles and commands upon dynasts who were ostensibly loyal, or otherwise recognize what such dynasts had claimed. So Abgar X was king of Edessa and a *consularis* from c. 238 to c. 242. Odainath, too, became a *consularis*, and he had the

¹⁰² *IGLS* 17.1.56; **Appendix 3**, 2b.

¹⁰³ *PAT* 0292; **Appendix 3**, 3c.

¹⁰⁴ What follows is informed by the detailed Hartmann (2001) 427–66 (esp. 436–38), (2008), esp. 343–59.

¹⁰⁵ Potter (2014) 244–46; Ando (2012) 166.

powers of a client king, even if he did not call himself one initially.¹⁰⁶ Finally, Roman emperors recognized the need for powerful magistrates who held *imperium* over vast regions and could give commands to provincial governors. So the emperor Philip made his brother Priscus *rector Orientis* in 248 and confirmed his *imperium* over the provinces of the Roman East (which he had apparently held already). Odainath, too, came to exercise *imperium* over many such provinces.¹⁰⁷ Whether it did so willingly or without any alternative,¹⁰⁸ the imperial court opted to endow Odainath with legitimacy as its chief magistrate in the East. It could do little else.

By the 250s, Odainath had become the dynast of Palmyra. But his career's initial stages are murky. Presumably, he played a key role in Palmyra's civic government and military elite during the 240s. By 251, he and his son Herodian Hairan were Roman senators with the status of "most illustrious" (Latin: *clarissimus*; Greek: *lamprotatos*). They also identified themselves as Palmyra's exarchs (or "leaders").¹⁰⁹ Odainath may have earned senatorial status from the emperors Gordian III (238–244) or Philip "the Arab" (244–249).¹¹⁰ These had campaigned in Syria against Persia and could have encountered him.

Senatorial status conferred no specific powers on Odainath, but as exarch and "leader" (*rs*), he clearly had unprecedented authority at Palmyra.¹¹¹ Premising dynastic succession, he had also given his titles to Herodian Hairan. We should conceive of Odainath as wielding the powers of a client king of Rome at this time. We have encountered how Abgar X briefly governed Edessa as a client king and a *consularis* (c. 238–c. 242).¹¹² But presently Odainath had to avoid the title of king. Among Bedouin, tribes or clans may have charismatic leaders. But elites nurture principles of equity. Greek civic councils in the eastern Roman Empire did too. Palmyra noticeably had no regal tradition, unlike Edessa and other Near Eastern societies.¹¹³ Odainath presumably did

¹⁰⁶ P2 in Drijvers and Healey (1999) 238, with Healey (2009) 61; Gnoli (2007), esp. 41–44 provides vital treatment. Also Potter (2014) 255.

¹⁰⁷ Potter (2014) 235; Ando (2012) 115–16, 170; Southern (2008) 40–41, 69.

¹⁰⁸ Winsbury (2010) 72–74.

¹⁰⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.54, 58; also *PAT* 2753. **Appendix 3**, 1b–d.

¹¹⁰ Hartmann (2001) 92; Southern (2008) 43; Gawlikowski (2010b) 468.

¹¹¹ Hartmann (2001) 92–97; Southern (2008) 43–46 discuss this matter.

¹¹² See above, n. 106.

¹¹³ Yon (2010) discusses this matter.

not want to alienate other Palmyrene notables, and so he avoided royal titles during the 250s. He instead called himself *ršʿ*, a title sometimes held by the foremost men in Arabian communities.¹¹⁴ But in practice, Odainath wielded the powers of a client king at Palmyra and established dynastic succession for his household.¹¹⁵ The Roman imperial court was sanctioning Odainath's titles and powers too.

We know nothing of Odainath's conduct when Shapur I overran Syria in 252 or so.¹¹⁶ Whereas Palmyra remained intact, its garrisons on the Euphrates were compromised. In his rock inscriptions, Shapur boasts of having captured Ana, a Euphrates site where the Palmyrenes maintained troops.¹¹⁷ We have noted how Dura-Europos fell in 256.¹¹⁸ A later text indicates that Odainath sought a treaty with Shapur when he invaded, either in 252 or, more likely, in 260. He was allegedly rebuffed. The event may never have occurred at all. We will return to it in Chapter 7.¹¹⁹ But Odainath must have preserved Palmyra from pillage. Shapur's inscriptions do not boast of it.

When Shapur invaded in 252, an Emesene dynast named Uranius rallied a force that repelled the Persian advance. Uranius even assumed imperial titles and minted imperial coins with his image.¹²⁰ He disappears from history thereafter. But his actions must have eased the pressure on Palmyra. Shapur apparently never marched against it. What Odainath was doing at the time is unclear. Presumably he garrisoned the city. He may have even aided Uranius.¹²¹ But whatever he did, the imperial court did not deem him fickle or unreliable. Instead, it promoted him. Odainath had consular rank by 258.

Odainath had more than Roman support. Any number of Palmyrenes embraced his unprecedented authority. Odainath had prevented Palmyra's capture by the Persians. He also kept Palmyra's caravan trade intact.¹²² Shapur's invasions certainly disrupted Palmyra's

¹¹⁴ At Hegra, Latin (*primus civitatis*); Nabataean (*ryš hgrʿ*). Al-Tahli and al-Daire (2005) 208–13. Also Hartmann (2001) 96.

¹¹⁵ Hartmann (2001) 92–97; Sommer (2017) 156–67.

¹¹⁶ See Barnes (2009), on 253 dating; Hartmann (2001) 100–1, Southern (2008) 46–47 on Odainath.

¹¹⁷ Young (2001) 166; Hartmann (2001) 80–81.

¹¹⁸ See p. 117, n. 39.

¹¹⁹ See p. 147, n. 22.

¹²⁰ TSO 150–54. Potter (1990) 323–28, (2014) 245. An inscription near Emesa endowed Uranius with heroic stature for his feat. *IGLS* 4.1799. For coins, see Baldus (1971).

¹²¹ Yet, Gawlikowski (2010b) 469. For discussion, Southern (2008) 46–47.

¹²² Sommer (2017) 166–68.

commercial lines, but its caravan trade did not cease. It adjusted. The Euphrates was still accessible to Palmyra through long stretches of wilderness. Armies could not patrol it easily. Much depended on whether nomads could be placated or suppressed. As we have seen in Chapter 3, nothing indicates that the Persians aimed to curb Palmyrene trade. They probably only disrupted it in wartime and otherwise imposed taxes.

Odainath's defense of caravan trade has left traces in Palmyra's inscriptions. In 257–258, Herodian Hairan received honors from Palmyrenes who made rafts of inflated skins. These moved goods down the Euphrates.¹²³ A caravan made a successful trip at this time too.¹²⁴ Sometime in the 260s, Odainath's deputy, Worod, aided caravans with his own resources. The chief merchants (*archemporoi*) praised him for it.¹²⁵ By protecting the caravan trade, Odainath accrued local support. He needed it. As we will learn in Chapter 7, certain Palmyrene elites surely chafed at his authority.

By 258, Odainath claimed the stature of *consularis* (Greek: *hypatikos*; Palmyrenean: *hptyq'*). Occupational associations at Palmyra honored him as such. It was probably at this time that the Tyrians did too.¹²⁶ But despite the Tyrians' honors, Odainath was not likely a suffect consul or the consular governor of Syria Phoenice. Consular status simply enhanced Odainath's authority at Palmyra. Outside communities could honor him as a benefactor or patron. During the 240s, Abgar X of Edessa and Iulius Priscus held unique powers couched in *hypateia*.¹²⁷ This term referred to the authority (*imperium*) that the Roman court delegated to a governor or dynast, as *consularis*, over certain territory. The Roman court similarly recognized Odainath's legitimacy as its client king and as Palmyra's ruler. Thereafter Palmyrene inscriptions no longer called Odainath and Hairan exarch or "leader" (*rš'*). Odainath's consular titles and powers apparently superseded these titles.¹²⁸ It was roughly at this time that Odainath married Zenobia and fathered Wahballath.

¹²³ IGLS 17.1.59; **Appendix 3**, 2g. Sommer (2017) 166–68 discusses this subject.

¹²⁴ IGLS 17.1.74.

¹²⁵ IGLS 17.1.67.

¹²⁶ IGLS 17.1.55–56, 143, with 59–60; Yon (2013) nos. 61, 157; Rey-Coquais (2006) no. 32. **Appendix 3**, 2a–f. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 50–51.

¹²⁷ See p. 117, n. 34 and p. 129, n. 106. Hartmann (2001) 105–8; Southern (2008) 48 discuss possibilities for Odainath's stature, including governorship of Syria Phoenice. Gnoli (2007) provides key treatment of *hypateia*. Winsbury (2010) 75, 161 perhaps overlooks the importance of the title *consularis*.

¹²⁸ Gnoli (2007) 52–79; Southern (2008) 47; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 50–51; Sommer (2017) 159 provide elaboration.

A man on the rise, Odainath's fortunes shifted even more in his favor, and to Syria's detriment, in 260. We have witnessed how Shapur defeated and captured Valerian in that year. Valerian's battered army then began to disintegrate. As Shapur's forces overran north Syria, various generals and dynasts scurried to deal with the emergency. Macrianus, a key commander, was one of them. With remnants of Valerian's forces, he defeated Shapur's army near the Mediterranean coast of south Turkey, apparently while it was pillaging. His officer Callistus (whom sources usually call Ballista) captured Shapur's concubines and baggage.¹²⁹ Odainath was another such figure. Having apparently accompanied Valerian's army, he gathered whatever Palmyrene and Roman forces he could and campaigned in north Syria and perhaps Mesopotamia. There he attacked some of Shapur's forces as they returned to Persian territory. He was presumably authorized to do so by Macrianus and Callistus.¹³⁰ Nothing specific is known about the encounter other than its success, but it bolstered Odainath's reputation.

Despite seizing the initiative, Odainath had attacked Shapur on behalf of Roman imperial authority. He was neither making a bid for imperial control nor instigating a civil war. But other Roman authorities in Syria were promoting their own claims to power. Macrianus soon declared his two children Augusti. He placed one, named Quietus, at Emesa, with Callistus in command there. With the other, he marched west to confront Valerian's son and co-emperor Gallienus. Macrianus was defeated in the Balkans in early 261. This provided Odainath with another opportunity. In support of Gallienus, and apparently with his endorsement, Odainath moved against Emesa at about this time. What happened next is murky. But Callistus and Quietus were soon dead, killed by Odainath or Emesenes that had joined him.¹³¹

Having secured Syria for his emperor, Odainath became its effective governor. Zonaras reports that Gallienus made Odainath "commander (*strategos*) of the East" at this time. He is probably describing Odainath's

¹²⁹ Syncellus, 716 (Mosshammer, 466); Zonaras, 12.23; Southern (2008) 58–59; Winsbury (2010) 68–69. On the name, see Potter (1990) 53–54, 343–46; Paschoud (2011) 130–32. For Gallienus's generals in Syria in 260–261, Mennen (2011) 222–27.

¹³⁰ Zos. 1.39. For Odainath's military, pp. 140–41, nn. 183–84. Gawlikowski (2010b) 470–73; Hartmann (2001) 133–38; Southern (2008) 59; Winsbury (2010) 68–69.

¹³¹ Zonaras, 12.24, who specifies Gallienus's support; *HA Gall.* 1–3, TT 14, 15.4, 18; *Continuator Dionis* in *FHG* 4.195. Hartmann (2001) 144–45; Potter (2014) 255; Southern (2008) 60. Also see *Genesis Rabbah* 76.6, in Appelbaum (2011) 532; Hartmann (2006a) 120 (Hebrew, 1.trpg in Halevi 1985–1989).

stature as “*mtqnn*’ of all the East, which the *Historia Augusta* incorrectly glosses as *imperator*.¹³² Whatever suspicions Gallienus and his staff harbored, they deemed it better to affirm his authority than to repress it. Their support paid dividends. In 262–263 or so, Odainath conducted an invasion of Persian territory.¹³³ Reclaiming Rome’s upper Mesopotamian provinces, he moved south and destroyed the city of Nehardea, which had a large Jewish population. Jews reviled the deed thereafter.¹³⁴ His campaign culminated at Ctesiphon, where Persian kings periodically resided (Shapur’s whereabouts are unknown).¹³⁵ According to Zosimus, his campaign there “trapped the Persians in their own homes. They were lucky just to save their children, women, and themselves.”¹³⁶ It was easily the Romans’ most successful campaign against the Persians in decades. Gallienus claimed the epithet *Persicus maximus* and celebrated a triumph in Rome the following year.¹³⁷

For the time being, Odainath’s successes and displays of loyalty ingratiated him to Emperor Gallienus. The imperial court was probably concerned with his growing power and autonomy, and Odainath surely had his own interests in mind.¹³⁸ But the imperial court was not in the position to displace him. Postumus had seized power in Gaul, and “Scythian” invasions were a recurring problem. In an era of fragmentation, usurpers, betrayal, and frontier breaches, Odainath was the face of stability and loyalty. So Gallienus’s court sanctioned Odainath’s powers and titles. It also continued to appoint governors for Odainath’s provinces, with Odainath acting as their overall commander.¹³⁹

After one of their victories over the Persians, Odainath and Herodian Hairan claimed the title of “king of kings.” Despite various theories about date, they probably did this in 263–264 or so, after

¹³² Zonaras, 12.24. Bleckmann (2007) 52–57; Ratti (2002) 90–91; Paschoud (2009) 147, (2011) 120–21; *HA Gall.* 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 10.1, 10.8, and 12.1; *HA TT* 15.5. On *mtqnn*’, see pp. 135–36, nn. 155–61.

¹³³ Hartmann (2001) 162–85 discusses the campaign and dates it to 262–63, which is supported by Gallienus’s titles of Parthicus/Persicus (Peachin (1990) 81–82). Also, Southern (2008) 70–71. Yet, Sartre and Sartre (2014) 54–56.

¹³⁴ *Iggeret Rav Šerira Gaʿon*, in Lewin (1921) 82. Unlike most, Gawlikowski (2007a) 304–5, (2010b) 470–73 associates this with Valerian’s disastrous campaign a few years earlier.

¹³⁵ Hartman (2001) 168–75.

¹³⁶ Zos. 1.39.2. See also *HA Gall.* 10.3, 10.6, 12.1, Valer. 4, *TT*. 15.1–4 for Persian campaigns.

¹³⁷ *HA Gall.* 9–12, which dubiously mentions captured Persian satraps; Hartmann (2001) 167–68, 175; Ratti (2002) 144.

¹³⁸ Winsbury (2010) 80–81.

¹³⁹ See Hartmann (2001) 186–94 (esp. 190–91), with Pflaum (1952), *IGLS* 14.8–21 (generally), and Southern (2008) 73–75 for these premises.

invading Persia.¹⁴⁰ Long cherished by Persian monarchs (who ruled over client kings), the title was now embraced by Odainath to promote his superiority to the Sasanian monarch. No surviving inscription securely from Odainath's lifetime calls him by the title.¹⁴¹ But inscribed fragments of a krater from Palmyra's hinterland suggest that he held it while living.¹⁴² Moreover, an inscription carved into Palmyra's monumental arch (**Fig. 2.7**)* shortly after a victory over the Persians identifies Herodian Hairan as king of kings.¹⁴³ We have already learned that such titles were unprecedented at Palmyra. They probably offended certain members of Palmyra's civic council who valued elite equity. But amid his victories, Odainath apparently believed that his position was secure. So he emulated the Persian royal court.

Various tesserae (tokens) communicate how Odainath expressed his regal stature. One lead tessera, believed to be from Antioch, shows Herodian Hairan wearing a Greek diadem and a Persian tiara, both symbols of royal authority. Its inscription identifies him in Greek as "Herodian, king (*basileus*)."¹⁴⁴ Other tesserae may depict both Odainath and Herodian. On these, Odainath has a diadem and a beard; Herodian is clean-shaven and wears a tiara.¹⁴⁵ Herodian's youthful appearance may reflect his relationship to Odainath, not his actual age. He was likely mature by the 260s. We have already mentioned statues that may depict Odainath in senatorial or consular dress.¹⁴⁶ In the past, certain marble heads have been dubiously identified with him too. A probable candidate, now lost but preserved in photographs, has revived discussion. Not entirely intact, it apparently bore a tiara.¹⁴⁷ So we can surmise that Odainath was couching his regal authority in Greek and Persian royal traditions. He imitated the Persian court in another key aspect. Odainath's courtiers and clients began to adopt his name: Septimius.¹⁴⁸ So Odainath's court

¹⁴⁰ Hartmann (2001) 176–85, 451–52, with Southern (2008) 71–73, discusses date and significance. Yet, Gawlikowski (2010b) 474–75; *IGLS* 17.1.61 (commentary) for alternatives, like 259–60 or 267–68.

¹⁴¹ *IGLS* 17.1.62, 120; **Appendix 3**, 5a, 5c. Millar (1993) 170.

¹⁴² *PAT* 1684; **Appendix 3**, 3a. Schlumberger (1951) no. 21, Pl. 25.3–6.

¹⁴³ *IGLS* 17.1.61; **Appendix 3**, 3b.

¹⁴⁴ Seyrig (1937); Gawlikowski (2010a) 67, Fig. 1, (2016a) 128, Fig. 3; Equini Schneider (1993) 22, 98, Fig. 16–17; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 73, no. 17; **Appendix 3**, 3d. It was acquired by a collector in Damascus in the 1930s.

¹⁴⁵ Gawlikowski (2010a) 69–70, Figs. 3–4, (2016a) 130–32, Fig. 4. These are *RTP* 4–5, perhaps 989.

¹⁴⁶ Balty (2005) 321–24, 337–38. See p. 96, n. 24.

¹⁴⁷ Gawlikowski (2010a) 69, (2016a) 127, Fig. 2; Balty (2002) Fig. 1–4; Balty (2005) 331–33.

¹⁴⁸ Potter (2014) 257; Southern (2008) 4; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 79, with possible implications for Zenobia's name.

expressed its Roman stature and authority in some very Persian ways. Iulia Aurelia Zenobia started calling herself Septimia then too.

Certain titles that Odainath apparently bore in the 260s raise vexing issues. *Dux Romanorum* and *mtqnn'* are foremost among them. Odainath probably assumed these titles after defeating Shapur's forces and then Callistus in 260–261.¹⁴⁹ But no inscriptions call Odainath *dux Romanorum* even if contemporary lines of the *Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle* seem to echo it.¹⁵⁰ Likewise, Greek sources that call Odainath *strategos* probably refer to his Latin title of *dux* while invoking his command over the “East” as *mtqnn'*.¹⁵¹ His son Wahballath would eventually become *dux Romanorum*, or *strategos Romaïōn* in Greek.¹⁵² The *Historia Augusta* describes Odainath as *imperator* of the East.¹⁵³ This makes him appear more like a usurper. But the *Historia Augusta* was perhaps just conflating his titles and misunderstood his *imperium* over Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia.¹⁵⁴

The title “*mtqnn'* of all the East” is perhaps the most vexing of Odainath's titles. It denoted that he was some sort of governor or restorer “of the East.” But the meaning of *mtqnn'* is debatable. As we have learned, it appears on one Palmyrenean inscription raised by Zenobia's generals after his death.¹⁵⁵ It is also derived from the Palmyrene verb meaning to “set right,” “set straight,” or “restore.” But its Latin counterpart is not obvious. Scholars in search of its counterpart often surmise that it is *corrector totius orientis* in Latin. In fact, *correctores* (often *epanorthotai* in Greek) who exercised extraordinary *imperium* are attested in the eastern empire.¹⁵⁶ Objections have been raised to these theories, however. *Corrector* is sometimes dismissed for not being a precise translation of *mtqnn'*. Others conceive of Odainath's Latin title as *restitutor totius orientis*. *Restitutor* is traditionally a title of praise and would have been merely honorary.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁹ Bleckmann (2007) 52–57; Hartmann (2001) 146–47; Southern (2008) 63–67 discuss this topic.

¹⁵⁰ TSO 171 (ἄρξει Ῥωμαίων: “he will lead the Romans”). Potter (1990) 328–47 for commentary.

¹⁵¹ Zonaras, 12.23–24; Syncellus, 716 (Mosshammer 466–67); Hartmann (2001) 151–52.

¹⁵² Geißen (1974–1983) nos. 3053–63; Bland (2011) 141–42. See pp. 176–77, nn. 85–88.

¹⁵³ HA Gall. 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 10.1, 10.8, 12.1; HA TT 15.

¹⁵⁴ Hartmann (2001) 151–52, 184–85; Paschoud (2009) provide similar interpretations. The *Historia Augusta* perhaps borrowed Odainath as *imperator* from the usurpers (*tyranni*) preserved in Polemios Silvius. Mommsen (1892) 521.

¹⁵⁵ PAT 0292; **Appendix 3**, 3c; Millar (1993) 170; Winbsury (2010) 75.

¹⁵⁶ Guerber (1997). See n. 162, next page.

¹⁵⁷ For the various interpretations, see Hartmann (2001) 146–61; Potter (1996); Gnoli (2007) 90–91; Southern (2008) 67–70; Swain (1993); Sartre (2005) 354–55; Winsbury (2010) 163; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 58.

The situation becomes even more complicated when we contemplate how the title seems to correspond to the Greek *epanorthotēs tēs Anatolēs*. A later Palmyrenean inscription ascribes the title to Wahballath (*ʿpnrttʿ dy mđnhʿ klh*).¹⁵⁸ It also appears in a fragmentary Greek inscription honoring Wahballath, Odainath, or Herodian Hairan.¹⁵⁹ Moreover, some have raised doubt that *epanorthotēs* and *mtqnnʿ* are strict equivalents. Whereas Wahballath appears in Palmyrene only as *epanorthotēs*, Odainath appears only as *mtqnnʿ*.¹⁶⁰ To make matters worse, no inscriptions from Odainath's lifetime call him *mtqnnʿ* of the East. Perhaps Odainath never held any such title. Zenobia could have ascribed it to him to give legitimacy to Wahballath's powers and titles.¹⁶¹

Altogether, it is best to conceive of *mtqnnʿ* as the Palmyrenean translation of *rector* or *corrector*, with these being synonymous. The verbs *rego* in Latin and *tqn* in Aramaic, the basis for the titles, can have similar meanings ("to keep straight" and "to set right").¹⁶² In 248, Philip the Arab had made his brother Priscus *rector Orientis*, thereby continuing the consular authority that he already wielded over Syria's governors. Gallienus had apparently authorized similar powers for Odainath. So *rector/corrector* appeared in Palmyrenean as *mtqnnʿ*. It was also rendered as *epanorthotēs* in Greek or its Palmyrenean transliteration. The Latin, Greek, and Aramaic terms may not be precisely the same, but this is not a problem. The Palmyrenes often equated similar concepts from the different languages to one another through "dynamic equivalence."¹⁶³ They also frequently captured the general meaning of Greek or Latin civil concepts in Palmyrenean, not their precise definition. Finally, their approach to translation could range from transcribing a Greek term (or the Greek translation of a Latin one) to creating a new Palmyrenean counterpart.¹⁶⁴ So *mtqnnʿ* as the Palmyrenean translation

¹⁵⁸ PAT 0317; **Appendix 3**, 4c. Brock (2005) 15.

¹⁵⁹ IGLS 17.1.62, with commentary for bibliography; **Appendix 3**, 5a.

¹⁶⁰ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 58; Hartmann (2001) 148–49; Southern (2008) 68. Swain (1993) for objections.

¹⁶¹ Millar (1993) 170; Winsbury (2010) 75, 163.

¹⁶² Hartmann (2001) 146–61 makes detailed and compelling arguments. Cantineau (1935) 85–86 treats meaning. For *mtqnnʿ* as a divine title in Syriac, see Brock (2005) 15–16. Also see Ando (2012) 115, 170.

¹⁶³ Taylor (2002) 320–24.

¹⁶⁴ Potter (1996) 272–73, with Hartmann (2001) 150; Winsbury (2010) 163. In Palmyrenean, the fulfillment of civic obligations (Greek: *politeia*, *politeuma*, *leitourgia*; IGLS 17.1.149, 222, 224) could be invoked with transliterations (*pltyʿ*: IGLS 17.1.222) or paraphrase describing how a citizen "pleased all his city" (IGLS 17.1.224: *špr . . . klh lmdyṯ*, appearing in Greek in IGLS 17.1.22).

of (*cor*)*rector* is reasonable. The Greek *epanorthotēs tēs Anatolēs* is consistent with the general message too. Odainath's title also was probably misconstrued by Zonaras (*strategos* of the East) and the *Historia Augusta* (*imperator* of the East), who suggest that Odainath held it while living (as early as 260–261).¹⁶⁵ Odainath was indeed “*mtqnn*” of all the East” during his lifetime, and this corresponded to the unique position of (*cor*)*rector totius Orientis*, which Gallienus's court had recognized. It gave him *imperium* over the provinces of Syria, Arabia, and Mesopotamia and enabled him to command provincial governors, just as Priscus had done in 248.¹⁶⁶ In 268, Zenobia would claim the title and its powers for her son Wahballath.

If Odainath's title as “king of kings” was unprecedented at Palmyra, so was the hero worship that he may have enjoyed. A domestic mosaic (Figs. 6.1–6.2) excavated at Palmyra raises the possibility that Odainath was receiving divine honors.¹⁶⁷ One panel (Fig. 6.1) depicts the Greek mythical Bellerophon fighting against a chimaera. Wearing Palmyrene military or caravan attire, he rides the winged horse Pegasus. Two eagles crown him with a wreath. A second panel (Fig. 6.2) portrays a man similarly dressed who hunts two Persian tigers. He rides a horse and shoots arrows from a bow. An eagle flies above him too. The mosaic bears an inscription identifying the craftsman who made it. But archaeologists have detected another inscription reading *mr* (lord). Odainath and Herodian Hairan are alone in having the title *mrn* (our lord) at Palmyra. So the mosaic apparently celebrates the victories of Odainath and Herodian Hairan over the Persians.

The themes of the mosaics align with how Odainath is depicted in the *Thirteenth Sibylline Oracle*.¹⁶⁸ The text contains prophecies for the calamities that Roman Syrians confronted in the 3rd century. Of course, the prophecies were composed after the events that they “predicted” occurred. The oracle had two anonymous compilers. The first compiler assembled most of the text and composed a great part of it too. This figure treats Shapur's invasion of 252 and Uranius's defense mounted against him at Emesa. The second compiler composed the final lines;

¹⁶⁵ Zonaras, 12.24; *HA Gall.* 1.1, 3.3, 3.5, 10.1, 10.8, 12.1; *HA TT* 15.5. Ratti (2002) 90–91; Paschoud (2009) 147, (2011) 120–21; Hartmann (2001) 151–52.

¹⁶⁶ Potter (1996), (2014) 255–56; Hartmann (2001) 155–58; Southern (2008) 69.

¹⁶⁷ For the mosaic, its scenes, and apotheosis, Gawlikowski (2005a); Gawlikowski and Żuchowska (2010). Kaizer (2014) 304–5, n. 51.

¹⁶⁸ Gawlikowski (2005a) 1303 governs what follows.



FIGURE 6.1 Panel from mosaic honoring Odainath (courtesy of Michal Gawlikowski and the Polish Mission to Palmyra; photographer Waldemar Jerke; panels cropped and converted to grayscale by N. Andrade)

these are dedicated to Odainath.¹⁶⁹ Significantly, the text likens Odainath to a lion and describes how this lion had killed a venom-spitting beast, a horned stag, and an arrow-shooting goat.¹⁷⁰ These three beasts probably represented Macrianus, Callistus, and Shapur's Persians.¹⁷¹ Even if the beasts are not exactly the same, the basic theme seems to coincide with that of the mosaic.¹⁷²

Altogether, we can infer that Odainath had a broad base of support at Palmyra. He had protected its caravans and had kept the Persians at bay. So his compatriots elevated him in an unprecedented fashion.

¹⁶⁹ On the text, Potter (1990) 141–57, Hartmann (2009), esp. 80–81.

¹⁷⁰ *TSO* 164–69. Potter (1990) 328–47 for commentary.

¹⁷¹ Potter (1990) 341.

¹⁷² Gawlikowski (2005a) 1303.



FIGURE 6.2 Panel from mosaic honoring Odainath (courtesy of Michal Gawlikowski and the Polish Mission to Palmyra; photographer Waldemar Jerke; panels cropped and converted to grayscale by N. Andrade)

Recognizing him as their “king of kings,” they also may have worshipped him as a hero or divine figure. But Odainath had perhaps overestimated how secure his position was. Certain members of Palmyra’s elite apparently did not favor such unprecedented stature. As we will see in Chapter 7, their contempt would prove mortal.

A prominent figure at Odainath’s court was Septimius Worod.¹⁷³ He had earned equestrian rank by the late 250s. At that time, he bore the name Iulius Aurelius Worod. After 260, Worod played key roles in Palmyra’s civil administration. He was variously *procurator ducenarius* of Augustus, *iuridicus* of Palmyra, and *argapet*.¹⁷⁴ If not merely honorific, the first title defined him as an equestrian fiscal official.¹⁷⁵ The

¹⁷³ On Worod, see Hartmann (2001) 203–211; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 63–70; Southern (2008) 74.

¹⁷⁴ *IGLS* 17.1.63–69. As *argapet*, he made the dedication of Ingholt (1936) 93–96, Pl. 19.1 (=PAT 0063).

¹⁷⁵ Pflaum (1950), esp. 151–60; Mennen (2011) 133.

second made him the foremost dispenser of law and jurisprudence at Palmyra. The final title was Iranian. It probably communicated his stature as treasurer for Odainath's administration or as Palmyra's governor in his absence.¹⁷⁶ Sometimes scholars posit that Worod's loyalties were divided between Palmyra and Persia. But this is just a figment of his Iranian name.¹⁷⁷ An impressively elaborate "temple tomb" built in 220 belonged to a certain Worod. But we cannot be certain that this was the same person.¹⁷⁸

As Odainath assumed unprecedented titles, he conferred them upon his city too. Throughout Odainath's life, Palmyra had the status of Roman colony. This marked Palmyra as a Roman collective. But Odainath amplified Palmyra's stature. He first promoted it to a "most illustrious colony" (*lamptrotatē koloneia*)¹⁷⁹ and then "mother colony" (*metrokoloneia*).¹⁸⁰ Through these titles, Odainath asserted Palmyra's preeminence among the other Roman collectives of Syria. Some of these collectives had previously claimed the title of "mother colony."¹⁸¹ The status defined Palmyra, unique in its cultural life, as a Roman polity of immense consequence.

In the 260s, Odainath had reached the peak of his success. His army was vital to it. Some later sources indicate that it was filled with local peasants and shepherds.¹⁸² This is not true. Being dimorphic, Palmyrenes had long been trained in horse archery or dromedary tactics. Odainath was the member of a vibrant military elite that commanded various types of horsemen and camel riders, including archers. But Odainath also had assumed command over Roman regulars during the turmoil of the 260s. This is probably how he came to command so-called *clibanarii*, if he had not done so already.¹⁸³ Modeled on Sasanian cataphracts, these were Roman cavalymen whose bodies and horses were protected by heavy armor. So they sweltered in the heat of the sun, and their name

¹⁷⁶ Gnoli (2007) 95–113; Hartmann (2001) 207–8; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 66–67.

¹⁷⁷ Hartmann (2001) 208–209; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 63–64; Southern (2008) 75.

¹⁷⁸ Schmidt-Colinet (1992) with 41 (inscription); al-As'ad, al-As'ad, and Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 299–302. *IGLS* 17.1.440 provides key commentary.

¹⁷⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.61, 65.

¹⁸⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.67.

¹⁸¹ Millar (2006) 202–3, 209–10. For Emesa and Edessa, *BMC Syria*, 239–41, *Mesopotamia* 91–118; P 1–2 in Drijvers and Healey (1999).

¹⁸² Orosius, 7.22.12; Festus, *Brev.* 23; Jordanes, *Rom.* 290–91.

¹⁸³ Hartmann (2001) 99; Southern (2008) 45, 71. Zos., 1.39; Festus, *Brev.* 24.

was derived from a Greek word for oven.¹⁸⁴ Graffiti from Dura-Europos depict such figures. Armor from their horses has been excavated there. These were certainly Roman.¹⁸⁵ Zenobia would command such *clibanarii* too.

With such forces, Odainath apparently commenced a second invasion of Persia in 267. It is poorly documented. Some have doubted that it occurred. Only Zosimus mentions two invasions, even if the *Historia Augusta* implies that Odainath invaded Persia a second time.¹⁸⁶ But it apparently brought Odainath to the brink of Ctesiphon yet again and broadened Odainath's base of support. It also may have further alienated the Palmyrenes who resented him.

By 267, the courts of Gallienus and Odainath had established a relationship of reciprocity. Gallienus could not manage affairs in Syria himself, but Odainath could. As Odainath won victories over the Persians that had eluded his predecessors, he gave Gallienus credit. He also received the governors that Gallienus appointed. In turn, Gallienus recognized Odainath's titles and *imperium* in the East. Their reciprocity enabled them to confront many challenges of the 260s.

But such reciprocity was also tenuous. Any distrust could kill it. At the peak of its success, it collapsed. Gallienus's court had apparently decided to make a move on Odainath. So had a Palmyrene faction that chafed at his unprecedented stature. Odainath then became yet another casualty of 3rd-century imperial politics. Let's explore how Zenobia became a widow and a ruler.

¹⁸⁴ Eadie (1967) 169–71; Haynes (2013) 92. These were not necessarily Persians or mercenaries, as Winsbury (2010) 126 and Nakamura (1993) 138 suggest.

¹⁸⁵ James (2011) 307–8; Goldman (1999) 32–34, Fig. A. 14a–b; James (2004) esp. 259.

¹⁸⁶ Zos. 1.39. *HA Gall.* 12.1. See Hartmann (2001) 211–18; Southern (2008) 70–71, 76; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 55–56 for theories.

Widowhood

In 268 or so, Odainath's life was cut short. His son Herodian Hairan perished with him, the two of them dying the violent deaths so typical of the period. The surviving sources differ about who killed them and why. We may never know for certain. But we can assume that Zenobia had to bury her husband.

Various accounts of Odainath's murder apparently started to circulate shortly after it occurred. But they have left only traces in the later source material. In the 7th century, John of Antioch explained Odainath's death in the following way:

Odainath was killed by a plot of Gallienus, and then Zenobia took power over there. She was Odainath's wife but had a manly disposition, and she avenged the death of her husband with the aid of his companions.¹

John's version replicates Zosimus's testimony nearly word for word.² Otherwise his references to Gallienus's involvement and Zenobia's vengeance were probably inspired by the *Continuator Dionis* and John Malalas.³ Other sources point the finger elsewhere. According to the *Historia Augusta*, Odainath's cousin Maeonius committed the murder,

¹ John of Antioch, Frag. 231 in Roberto (2005), 176 in Mariev (2008).

² Zos. 1.39.2.

³ Malalas, 12.26–27, in Thurn (2000). For the *Continuator Dionis*, p. 3, n. 8. I thank David Potter for this observation. John of Antioch read Malalas. Roberto (2016).

only himself to die violently shortly thereafter. But he did not plan it alone:

He [Maeonius] however reportedly plotted with Zenobia first. She could not accept that her stepson Herodes was being declared *princeps* in priority to her sons Herennianus and Timolaus.⁴

These are only two of the stories told about Odainath's death; there are many more. The sources portray amazingly diverse motives and circumstances. The contradictions are abundant.⁵ It seems impossible to identify Odainath's killers. But we will try.

Exactly when and where Odainath died are unknown, but we can determine a time frame. Claudius II died in August of 270. Aurelian came to power weeks later. But his court dated his first regnal year from August of 269 to August of 270. This obscured his overthrow of Claudius's brother and successor, Quintillus. By contrast, when Zenobia's Palmyrenes controlled Egypt (late 270–early 272), they treated August of 270 to August of 271 as the first year of Aurelian's reign. By 271, they also defined it as the fourth year that Wahballath governed. All these regnal years enable us to identify roughly when Odainath died. It was between August of 267 and August of 268, probably early in 268.⁶ Regarding location, Zosimus situates him at Emesa.⁷ Syncellus places him in north Anatolia, which the "Scythians" had overrun.⁸ Since Syncellus ostensibly had access to the same source tradition as Zosimus, his testimony may reflect a later retelling based on the contemporaneity of the "Scythian" invasions and Odainath's death.⁹ But wherever he was, Odainath was perhaps planning to confront the "Scythians." He had apparently just returned westward from his second invasion of Persia.

All the sources for Odainath's death are late. They date from the 4th to the 12th centuries. Some of their discrepancies were introduced in later periods. But their narratives also contain kernels that originated

⁴ HA TT 17.2.

⁵ Kaizer (2005) 73–79; Southern (2008) 78–79 capture this problem.

⁶ Hartmann (2001) 231–41 (esp. 238); Southern (2008) 76–78. Key papyri are: *P. Oxy.* 2908, 2921; *SB* 11589, with Rea (1972) 25; Rathbone (1986) 119–24; Estiot (2004) 116–17; Kreucher (1998) 260–61, 267–68.

⁷ Zos. 1.39.2.

⁸ Syncellus 717 (Mosshammer 467); Hartmann (2001) 217–18.

⁹ Mecella (2013) 500.

earlier, perhaps even during Zenobia's lifetime. While confusing and confused, they even seem to engage with two basic early traditions (or sets of traditions). One attributed Odainath's death to Gallienus's court, the other to a Palmyrene killer. Some scholars have recognized that both traditions have merit. Certain Palmyrenes resented Odainath's supreme authority, and Gallienus's court increasingly feared his growing autonomy.¹⁰ In fact, Gallienus's court may have taken credit for killing Odainath briefly after his assassination.

One statement made by the *Historia Augusta* is an outlier. We have already encountered it. Although it does not unambiguously link Zenobia to Odainath's actual murder, it reports that Odainath's cousin Maeonius and Zenobia had at some point plotted against him. This seems plausible. She and Wahballath obviously benefited from the assassination. If Herodian Hairan had survived, he would have succeeded Odainath. He could even have chosen to eliminate potential rivals mothered by Zenobia. Through assassination, she could assume power for her own brood.¹¹ A motive is easy to find.

But Zenobia probably did not do it. Her complicity receives little traction in the sources. The *Historia Augusta*, ruthlessly unreliable and welcoming to any scandal, is alone in implicating her.¹² In its usual erratic way, it even claims that she conspired against Odainath so that she could promote children who probably never existed (Herennianus and Timolaus). Finally, we suspect that the *Historia Augusta* is parroting propaganda from the courts of Claudius and Aurelian, which made its way into its sources. We will return to this matter later in the chapter.

Other sources finger Palmyrene relatives. Political aspirations and familial squabbles allegedly inspired their actions. We encountered Odainath's cousin Maeonius moments ago. The *Historia Augusta* identifies him as the killer. But whether Maeonius (perhaps Ma'nai in Palmyrenean) was a real person is uncertain.¹³ According to Syncellus, the culprit was a man also named Odainath.¹⁴ This testimony reflects a confusing tendency that afflicted later Greek authors. They often named Palmyrene men after Odainath when their actual names were unknown

¹⁰ The theory outlined in this section largely agrees with Hartmann (2001) 218–30 (esp. 224), but with insights offered by Kaizer (2005); Mecella (2013) 495–507; Southern (2008) 78–81.

¹¹ Kaizer (2005) 78; Watson (1999) 57; Southern (2008) 78; Winsbury (2010) 40–41, 152.

¹² *HA* TT 16, 17; Watson (1999) 57; Southern (2008) 78; Stoneman (1992) 108 for present views.

¹³ *HA* TT 15.5–6, 17; Gawlikowski (1985) 259; Hartmann (2001) 222–23.

¹⁴ Syncellus, 717 (Mosshammer, 467).

or lost.¹⁵ The concise descriptions of aggrieved relatives or a domestic plot provided by the *Historia Augusta*, Syncellus, and Zosimus possibly share the same source tradition, perhaps even Dexippus. But in Zonaras's narrative, we encounter greater detail. He claims that an unnamed relative stabbed Odainath after being put in chains for a breach of hunting etiquette.¹⁶ Here Zonaras ostensibly had access to another source tradition that imparted greater details about the physical murder, though without contradicting the other accounts just mentioned. We cannot trust these texts regarding the specific murderer. But they all seem to engage with an early tradition (or traditions) that ascribed the physical assassination to an angry or jealous relative. With the passage of time, discrepancies were introduced. We can surmise that the sources are at least right in suggesting that Palmyrenes were involved. Some Palmyrene elites, including extended family, surely resented Odainath's authority, titles, and perhaps apotheosis.¹⁷

In fact, the disappearance of Septimius Worod after 267 suggests an internal coup. Honored by statues and inscriptions throughout the 260s, he suddenly vanishes at the time of Odainath's death. He may have been old. We have seen how a certain Worod owned an elaborate tomb c. 220. But he also could have been killed by the conspirators. Or maybe he was involved in the plot. If so, he met his end when Zenobia doled out her revenge.¹⁸

But we can suspect that the Palmyrene conspirators did not act alone. They were cooperating with Gallienus's court, if not Gallienus himself. The fragments of Peter the Patrician and of the *Continuator Dionis* (who may be Peter the Patrician) bear witness to tension between the courts of Gallienus and Odainath. The ultimate source of their information is uncertain and is often dismissed.¹⁹ But their sources, also used by the *Historia Augusta*, can be traced to the 4th century at latest, and their testimony should be taken seriously.²⁰ It may even reflect the propaganda

¹⁵ *Continuator Dionis* in *FHG* 4.195.

¹⁶ Zonaras, 12.24, with *HA Gall.* 12.6–13.3; Syncellus, 717 (Mosshammer, 466–67); Zos. 1.39; Mecella (2013) 495–507 (esp. 505) for traditions.

¹⁷ Kaizer (2014) 304–5, with n. 51; Southern (2008) 80.

¹⁸ Hartmann (2001) 210–11; Southern (2008) 80; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 70; *IGLS* 17.1.61 for theories.

¹⁹ For issues with the sources, Mecella (2013) 502–3.

²⁰ Hartmann (2001) 33–34, 37–39. See Winsbury (2010) 78. Peter the Patrician certainly had access to Dio, Dexippus, and Eunapius. Treadgold (2007) 267. The *HA* and *Continuator Dionis* record the same anecdote about Aurelian's conduct at Tyana in 272 (see p. 197, nn. 27–29).

of Gallienus's court in 267–268, which was now accusing Odainath of committing both prior and current misdeeds. One fragment claims that Odainath ordered the execution of a certain “Karinus” (Quirinus) after showing him his lavish funeral arrangements. It states that “Karinus” disapproved of Odainath's involvement in “the war of the Romans” (presumably at Emesa in 261). He was apparently attached to Gallienus in some way.²¹ Whether it was true, the story hints at growing tensions between Odainath and the Roman court preceding his death.

Another fragment alleges that Odainath tried to make his own peace with King Shapur after he had invaded Roman territory and crossed the Euphrates River, probably in 260.²² He had sent a letter to Shapur with gifts. But Shapur threw them in a river (presumably the Euphrates) and responded with death threats. We are not certain whether this episode actually occurred.²³ It is also a strange outlier. Most traditions praise Odainath's abilities and cooperation with Gallienus. Perhaps Odainath's offer was a ploy. Malalas suggests so.²⁴ But yet again the story may echo the propaganda of Gallienus's court, which had come to impugn Odainath as disloyal.

A most important fragment describes how a courtier of Gallienus named Rufinus killed Odainath for his “attempting a revolution.”²⁵ Rufinus is obscure. Some identify him as a governor of Syria Phoenice or Arabia under Gallienus.²⁶ But this episode has some unusual elements. It indicates that Rufinus engineered Odainath's assassination while being immobilized by gout. Asserting that Odainath's son had dispatched an accusation against Rufinus to Gallienus's court, it calls this son “the younger Odainath.” This is in keeping with how later Greek sources often ascribed Odainath's name to Palmyrenes whose names had been lost. In the work of the *Continuator Dionis* (or Peter the Patrician), the fragment seems to have appeared between episodes set in 260. Some scholars have made sense of all this by treating the younger Odainath as Zenobia's husband. By this logic, the elder was his father Hairan, but

²¹ *FHG* 4.195; Hartmann (2001) 156–57. On this fragment, Bleckmann (1992) 127–29, (2007) 57; Brecht (1999) 292; Banchich (2015) 124.

²² *FHG* 4.187; Hartmann (2001) 136–37; Southern (2008) 60–61; Banchich (2015) 115–16. Winsbury (2010) 79 dates the episode later.

²³ Hartmann (2001) 137; Banchich (2015) 115–16.

²⁴ Malalas, 12.26–27 in Thurn (2000). Hartmann (2001) 137–38.

²⁵ *FHG* 4.195.

²⁶ Teixidor (2005) 198. But Hartmann (2001) 226–28 documents the problems with any clear identification.

misnamed, and c. 260 Odainath was implicating Rufinus for killing his father while governor of Syria Phoenice c. 230.²⁷

But this theory has problems. No evidence from Palmyra indicates that Odainath's father Hairan ever held the dynastic stature or "revolutionary" potential of his son, who only starts to surface as Palmyra's leader in the 250s. There was no obvious reason to have Odainath's father killed c. 230. Rufinus's health adds another wrinkle. When Gallienus asks why Rufinus killed the elder Odainath, Rufinus proclaims his desire to kill the younger one. But Rufinus also has serious gout and is immobile. So when Gallienus predictably asks him how he could kill anyone, Rufinus clarifies that he gives orders, just like Gallienus.²⁸ Perhaps, as some suggest, Rufinus had killed Odainath's father ("the elder Odainath") when he was younger. But nothing in the fragment specifies that Rufinus killed anyone himself. Instead, the point is that Rufinus, whether or not he was healthy, kills through delegation.

So we should surmise that the episode refers to the death of Zenobia's Odainath in 267–268. It probably describes Wahballath as "the younger Odainath" too.²⁹ References to Wahballath by name are noticeably absent from the Greek sources. His name had apparently been lost in the later Roman and Byzantine Greek traditions. So it was easy for later authors to ascribe Odainath's name to him, as they did for other Palmyrenes. The episode also suggests that Rufinus had been coordinating with Palmyrene conspirators. What this means is that Zenobia had dispatched the accusation to Gallienus once she had consolidated power. But she did so in the name of Wahballath, Odainath's formal successor. Intriguingly, the fragment depicts Gallienus as largely unaware of Rufinus's activity. So it suggests that members of Gallienus's court had perpetrated the act without his direct involvement but with his approval, whether current or retroactive.

To summarize, some later sources engage an earlier tradition (or traditions) that attributed the physical act to Palmyrenes. Others invoke an earlier tradition that implicated the plotting of Gallienus's court. These premises are not incompatible. We can surmise that Gallienus's court and a Palmyrene cabal were coordinating. The triggerman was a Palmyrene with access to Odainath, perhaps even a disgruntled relative.

²⁷ Banchich (2015) 120–22; Bleckmann (1995) 91–97, (2007) 59–60. Yet, Hartmann (2001) 226–29.

²⁸ *FHG* 4.195.

²⁹ Kienast (1996) 239; Hartmann (2001) 229; Stoneman (1992) 108. See p. 113, n. 12.

Of course, such a theory has its problems. So few sources name Gallienus or his court as instigators. The plot's timing also seems strange. The Herulians had just made major inroads into Roman territory. An imperial rival controlled western Europe. The usurper Aureolus was soon to give Gallienus's court all that it could handle at Milan. By contrast, Odainath had won major victories over the Persians and had given Gallienus credit for them. In Chapter 6, we witnessed how Gallienus's court stood to benefit from a strong and loyal (if fairly autonomous) presence at Palmyra.

But according to the present theory, Gallienus's senior commanders were pushing toward a harder line in dealing with Odainath in 267–268. They feared his autonomy and hoped that his death would seamlessly bring restored control in the East, despite the obvious risks of exacerbating the current instability.³⁰ These were military men of mostly Balkan backgrounds. In their number we can include Gallienus's cavalry commander Claudius and his praetorian prefect Heraclianus. The dynamic officer Aurelian was linked to them too.³¹ What happened after Odainath's death suggests a motive. While Gallienus besieged Aureolus at Milan, they had him killed in late summer of 268.³² The assassins then made Claudius emperor, and he appointed Aurelian head of his cavalry.

Both Claudius and Aurelian proved hostile to Odainath's dynasty from the start. Significantly, their hostility had taken shape before Zenobia's military offensives against their territories in 270. In his short reign, Claudius had to deal foremost with the Gothic breach of his Danubian frontier. But he apparently tried to reclaim Odainath's territories. According to the *Historia Augusta*, the prefect Heraclianus, also an assassin of Gallienus, undertook a disastrous expedition against Zenobia. The *Historia Augusta*, being hostile to Gallienus and favorable to Claudius, placed the episode in the final year of Gallienus's reign, along with much Gothic raiding that continued into 269.³³ It even omitted Claudius's involvement in Gallienus's murder.³⁴ But both the

³⁰ Hartmann (2006b) 107–18 offers a different perspective. See p. 150, n. 36. Hartmann (2001) 226; Southern (2008) 79; Winsbury (2010) 78 weigh the arguments for and against Gallienus' involvement in light of the political context.

³¹ For Heraclianus, *PLRE* 1.417; Mennen (2011) 232–33.

³² Zos. 1.40.2; *HA Gall.* 14. On the cabal, Watson (1999) 41–42; Potter (2014) 260–61, and the detailed Hartmann (2006b). For dates in Egyptian papyri, see Rathbone (1986) 120; Hartmann (2001) 231–41.

³³ *HA Gall.* 13.4–6; Potter (2014) 259–60; Southern (2008) 90; Winsbury (2010) 78.

³⁴ Potter (2014) 259–60. Zos. 1.40.2 implicates Claudius. *HA Gall.* 14 does not.

Historia Augusta and Zosimus specify that Heraclianus was at Milan killing Gallienus in 268 and could not have been in Syria then. His expedition apparently happened while Claudius was emperor.³⁵

The present theory is largely contingent on dating Heraclianus's expedition to the reign of Claudius, not Gallienus. Not everyone agrees. An alternative theory is that Gallienus had been planning Heraclianus's expedition in early 268, in coordination with Odainath's death. But Aureolus's usurpation disrupted it, and then Gallienus's senior commanders had him killed. According to this other theory, they were more concerned with the volatile European frontiers and opposed the plan. So they plotted against him.³⁶

But there is an additional reason to date Heraclianus's campaign to Claudius's reign, in support of the present theory. Claudius's adoption of the title *Parthicus Maximus* briefly before his death in 270 points to a military campaign against the Palmyrenes, who were being framed as the "Parthian" enemy.³⁷ The activity of Claudius's successor Aurelian supports this view. After defeating the Palmyrenes in 272–273, he too claimed the title *Parthicus Maximus* (and *Persicus Maximus*) and represented Palmyrenes as Parthians on his coins (Fig. 7.1).³⁸ So Heraclianus's expedition probably happened after Claudius defeated the Goths at Naissus in 269 but before Zenobia invaded Arabia in early 270. We hear no more of Heraclianus thereafter; he perhaps died.³⁹ But if it did happen under Claudius, his expedition would suggest that the Balkan killers of Gallienus had designs on restored control in the East. Pursuing it after Gallienus's death, they probably pressed for it in the months before.

To summarize, the later Greek sources implicate Gallienus's court. They derived their information from earlier sources, even while introducing distortions and errors. Significantly, coin evidence suggests that Zenobia's court conceived of Gallienus's court as complicit in Odainath's murder. Odainath's administration minted imperial coinage bearing Gallienus's likeness throughout 267. But the succeeding series has a very low number of known dies. So the minting of coins with

³⁵ Potter (2014) 262.

³⁶ Hartmann (2006b) 107–18.

³⁷ *ILS* 571 = *CIL* 8.4876; Ando (2012) 209. Kienast (1996) 231; Peachin (1990) 85. The Senate probably did not confer the title.

³⁸ See *RIC* 5.1; Kienast (1996) 235; Potter (2014) 267.

³⁹ Iulius Placidianus holds the position c. 270; *PLRE* 1.704. *HA* Gall. 14.1 implies death on campaign; Ratti (2002) 160–61.



FIGURE 7.1 Antoninianus of Aurelian (ANS 1935.117.326; courtesy of the American Numismatic Society)

Gallienus's image apparently ceased early in 268. Antioch only minted coins with imperial portraits again under Claudius II.⁴⁰ The hiatus perhaps reflects economic or fiscal issues. Or maybe Odainath's death brought disruption. Or perhaps Zenobia had a serious grievance with Gallienus's court in 268. After he died, she eventually had coins minted with Claudius's image in the hope of reconciling with the imperial court. It did not happen.

Altogether the surviving narratives imply that in 267–268 Gallienus's senior officers, if not Gallienus himself, were portraying Odainath as a disloyal opportunist. This was a serious shift. For years, they had treated him as a legitimate figure of Roman authority. But now they alleged that

⁴⁰ Bland (1986–1987); Huvelin (1990) 252.

he was collaborating with the Persians or betraying the imperial court. This justified their plot and their boasts of success. Gallienus's court may have reaped the benefits of Odainath's service. But it still assassinated him, as well as his character, in 268.

As we have noted, the timing may not seem ideal. But members of Gallienus's court may have feared Odainath's ever increasing autonomy by 267. They also apparently gambled on their plot's seamless success. If it had worked as planned, they would have assumed control over Odainath's territories and armies without squandering any resources. Perhaps Gallienus initiated the plot. Or maybe his senior officers acted on their own initiative, while conspiring against Gallienus too.

The assassination of Odainath succeeded. But within a year, the coup had failed. Zenobia seized control. Claudius sent an army against her. It failed miserably. But then, as we surmise, the imperial court shifted its position on Odainath's assassination. To disguise the failure of its coup and to justify its aggression against Zenobia, it apparently promoted narratives of her murderous treachery and illegitimacy. No longer treating Odainath's death as a "success" of Gallienus, the court of Claudius (and later Aurelian) transformed it into a blemish on Zenobia's character. So they denounced her as an illegitimate usurper who seized the territories of her loyal and capable husband through deceit and murder. By attacking her, they could claim that they were avenging Odainath and stripping her of what she had illicitly taken. Such accusations found their way into the *Historia Augusta*. Bent on making Claudius and Aurelian look good, it communicated a plot hatched by Maeonius and Zenobia. It even alleged that she had acted murderously on behalf of nonexistent children. But it did not link Gallienus's court to the murder.

We now conclude our theory of Odainath's death. It is not the first, or last. As we have said, the truth may never be established, so vast are the shadows that the sources cast. Members of Gallienus's court and a Palmyrene cabal probably collaborated. If so, the conspirators made a lethal oversight. Zenobia lived.

Burying Odainath

Perhaps Odainath never envisioned how he would die. But he knew that he had to die someday. So he had a tomb built. Its inscription said the following:

- Greek: Septimius Odainath, most illustrious senator, son of Hairan, son of Wahballath, son of Nasor, founded at his own expense this burial monument for himself, his children, and his grandchildren, to honor them forever.
- Palmyrenean: Odainath the senator, son of Hairan, son of Wahballath, son of Nasor, built this tomb for himself, his children, and the children of his children, forever.⁴¹

Odainath's tomb inscription is formulaic. We have witnessed how Palmyrenes built tombs for themselves and their descendants. Odainath's inscription is also bilingual, as were many foundation inscriptions for tombs. The cession and funerary inscriptions inside them were usually in Palmyrenean (occasionally they are bilingual too).⁴² But in its banality, Odainath's inscription reminds us of an element of Zenobia's life that is often overlooked. In the tumult of 268, she had to bury her fallen husband.

We will address Zenobia's consolidation of power in the next chapter. It was a pressing concern. But Zenobia was apparently the only surviving adult member of Odainath's household. So she had assumed jural authority over it as its legal guardian. Palmyrene women sometimes organized funerary portraits and funerals for departed parents, siblings, and children, whether as their heirs or guardians.⁴³ Now the guardian of Odainath's children and his estate, Zenobia had to conduct appropriate rites for her husband too. She presumably held Odainath's funeral only after she had firmly grasped control. But she surely arranged for his body to be repatriated to Palmyra from wherever Odainath had been killed (Emesa probably) and prepared in the meantime.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, no sources specify how Zenobia treated her husband's corpse. So let's explore how the Palmyrenes dealt with death and burial. Then we can understand what it meant for Zenobia to lay Odainath to rest.

In his funerary inscription, Odainath bears the status of *vir clarissimus*, a title held by men of senatorial rank. This dates the tomb's construction to the late 240s or early 250s. But we do not know where

⁴¹ IGLS 17.1.545; **Appendix 3**, 1a.

⁴² Kaizer (2010b) 25.

⁴³ Cussini (2005a) 27; *PAT* 0840, 0877, 0901, 0915.

⁴⁴ For repatriation in antiquity, see Tybout (2016).

Odainath was buried. When Odainath commissioned the inscription, he was not yet at the peak of his career. He and Zenobia were not yet married either. However unique it would have been, Odainath perhaps acquired a more elaborate resting place after becoming “king of kings.” The inscription was also found outside its original context. It had become part of the Ayyubid bastion built later. We do not know from which tomb it originated.⁴⁵

We will return to Odainath’s tomb shortly. But for now, let’s think about his corpse. We know little about how Palmyrenes conceived of the afterlife, despite interpretations based on funerary materials and art.⁴⁶ Their beliefs probably varied. But there is one certainty. Palmyrenes considered it important to place markers for the dead. These markers embodied the deads’ unique charisma and enabled people to perform rites and offerings for them.⁴⁷ At Palmyra, the same word (*npš*) could denote the soul, the “self,” a grave marker, a funerary portrait, or even a tomb. In Palmyra’s earlier days, the marker was a gravestone containing a relief of the deceased. As the Palmyrenes increasingly built elaborate tombs, funerary portraits and sarcophagi within them served the purpose.⁴⁸

We know more about how Palmyrenes dressed and buried their dead. At Palmyra, cremations were rare.⁴⁹ Palmyrenes usually inhumed the departed. They sometimes deposited corpses in simple graves marked by tombstones. But many were interred in tombs, where they occupied burial niches (*loculi*) or even sarcophagi. Among the wealthy, corpses were mummified. Admittedly, the best evidence comes from earlier tower tombs.⁵⁰ But the practice possibly continued into the third century.

If Zenobia chose to mummify her husband, she followed a distinctive procedure. After Odainath’s body was washed, Zenobia had it wrapped in strips of linen and other textiles so that it could dehydrate.⁵¹ Once the body was dressed in the first white layer, a paste made

⁴⁵ *IGLS* 17.1.545 (commentary); Sartre and Sartre (2014) 127–28.

⁴⁶ Kaizer (2010b); Piacentini (2005).

⁴⁷ Colledge (1976) 58; Finlayson (1998) 1.2–3; Gawlikowski (2005b) 46; Kaizer (2010b) 25–26.

⁴⁸ Colledge (1976) 58; Gawlikowski (2005b) 46.

⁴⁹ Al-Hariri (2013); De Jong (2017) 295.

⁵⁰ De Jong (2017) 111, 295, with 288–91 and Colledge (1976) 58–64.

⁵¹ Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer (2000), esp. 55–56; al-As’ad, Chehade, and Schmidt-Colinet (2005); Piacentini (2005) 249; De Jong (2017) 295–96 inform what follows.

of myrrh and bitumen was applied.⁵² The practice has an intriguing parallel. In the Christian gospels, Jesus' disciples dress his corpse in linen wrappings soaked in myrrh and aloe.⁵³ For Odainath, a layer of coarser cloth followed. The third and final layer was made of finer, dyed textiles embroidered with impressive and intricate patterns.⁵⁴ Otherwise, if Zenobia chose not to mummify her husband's remains, she probably arranged for simple and unadorned dress, like a tunic.⁵⁵

Zenobia then had Odainath's body laid in state in their townhouse. In mourning, Zenobia probably avoided public appearances. Her attire surely was somber. She did not display any elegant clothes and jewels that Odainath had gifted her.⁵⁶ She wore no cosmetics. Meanwhile, Odainath's friends and clients came to pay their condolences. After the mourning period, Odainath was then given the public burial that Zenobia had arranged. Displaying the transition of power, it involved processions, prayers, wailing, and solemn rituals.⁵⁷ Their details mostly elude us. But we can be certain that Zenobia had Odainath's body laid to rest in a tomb. Inside it, only Odainath's loved ones and heirs would conduct intimately emotional funerary rituals where he lay.⁵⁸

For a tomb, Odainath and Zenobia had several options. Numerous tombs speckled Palmyra's immediate hinterland. They were concentrated at necropoleis ("cities of the dead") southeast, southwest, and northwest of the city and in the so-called "Valley of the Tombs." Burial sites to the north and east had mostly pit graves.⁵⁹ The tombs' features reflect diverse antecedents (Syrian, Persian, Parthian, Greek, and Roman).⁶⁰ The wealthy owned them. But they could entrust niches in them to family and clan members, clients, or paying customers. Some tombs had hundreds of such niches. We have witnessed how Odainath had his own tomb. Zenobia expected it to be her resting place too. It would not be so.

⁵² For bitumen sources, Diodorus 2.48, 19.98–100; Strabo 16.2.42–4; Pliny 2.235, 5.72; Ammianus 23.6.15–16. Finlayson (1998) 6, n. 4; Healy (1999) 254–55.

⁵³ John 19:39–20:7, with Matthew 27:59, Mark 15:40–16:1, Luke 23:53–24:1; al-As'ad, Chehade, and Schmidt-Colinet (2005).

⁵⁴ Schmidt-Colinet and Stauffer (2000), esp. 55–56; Stauffer (2012) 89.

⁵⁵ Stauffer (2012) 89.

⁵⁶ In funerary portraits, mourning women usually wear no jewelry. Krag (2017) 42–43.

⁵⁷ Toynbee (1971); Hope (2009) 71–77; Stol (2016) 375–79.

⁵⁸ Krag (2015), esp. 113–115. For burial practice at Palmyra and patterns in Roman Syria, see De Jong (2017), esp. 210–12.

⁵⁹ De Jong (2017) 288–91 notes necropoleis and cemeteries.

⁶⁰ De Jong (2017): tombs in Syria. Also, Colledge (1976) 61; Butcher (2003) 295–302; Finlayson (1998) 1.46–48; Gawlikowski (2005b) 44–55.



FIGURE 7.2 Tomb of Elahbel, exterior (now destroyed, photo by author)

Palmyrenes called tombs by various names. House of forever (*bt 'lm'*), burial place (*qbwr/qbr*), and *naphsha* (*nps'*) are some of them. But we now tend to identify three types of Palmyrene tombs. One is the “tower tomb”(Fig. 7.2*), often called a *mnemeion* (monument) in Greek.⁶¹ The towers had multiple stories and staircases. Each story contained burial niches (*loculi*) that could be decorated with funerary portraits. Sarcophagi were to be found too. Such tombs were popular in the late 1st and early 2nd centuries.⁶² Then Palmyrenes pursued other options.

⁶¹ Henning (2013a, 2013b); Gawlikowski (1970) 52–106.

⁶² Gawlikowski (1970) 44–48, (2005b) 47–51; De Jong (2017) 288–89.

Another such option was the underground *hypogeum* (otherwise Palmyrenean: *m'rt'*; Greek: *spelaiion*).⁶³ These were popular in the 2nd–3rd centuries.⁶⁴ Their galleries were often organized in the shape of a “T.” Their walls were lined with burial niches (*loculi*) and funerary portraits mounted over them. Many bodies could be laid to rest in a single niche.⁶⁵ At the ends of the galleries, sometimes in a chamber (*exedra*) marked by arches, decorated sarcophagi or banquet reliefs could be placed. Their lids contained portraits imitating a banquet. The deceased head of the household, surrounded by wife and children, usually reclined on the lid as though it were a dining couch (*klinē*). In some instances, three decorated sarcophagi were arranged so that their portraits simulated a “triclinium” (banquet with three couches). The tombs had various wall decorations, including frescoes. The most elaborate bear Greek mythological themes, like Achilles in women’s dress among the daughters of Lycomedes, a symposiastic Dionysos, or Ganymede (Zeus’s cupbearer).⁶⁶

Finally, certain tombs at Palmyra were “temple tombs” or “funerary temples.” Resembling temples, these were square structures on podiums that bore Corinthian pilasters, Greek entablatures, and, for the larger ones, porches with Corinthian columns. Their interiors had open-air courtyards surrounded by roofed columns and galleries lined with burial niches.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, their internal outlays are usually not well preserved. But one in particular (tomb 36) has been meticulously excavated. The biggest of them all, it had over 300 burial niches. Its floor plan was widely used in the housing complexes and religious precincts of the Roman and Parthian Near East; at its center was a peristyle courtyard open to the air.⁶⁸ Its architectural decorations suggest connections to coastal Syria and its Greek and Roman influences, but they were locally made. These included Dionysos, Nereids, and Erotes (winged babies) on dolphins, winged Victories and Medusas, and tragic masks. We have already learned that the temple may have belonged to

⁶³ PAT 0565, 0515.

⁶⁴ Gawlikowski (1970) 48–50, (2005b) 51–55; De Jong (2017) 289–90; Colledge (1976) 60.

⁶⁵ Gawlikowski (1970) 107–28, (2005b) 51–55; Saito (2005a), (2013); Saito and Nakahashi (2016) 73; Higuchi and Izumi (1994); Higuchi and Saito (2001) for what follows.

⁶⁶ Kaizer (2010b) 26–27; Sørensen (2016); Colledge (1976) 64–87.

⁶⁷ Gawlikowski (1970), 129–46; (2005b) 56; De Jong (2017) 291, with Saito (2016).

⁶⁸ Schmidt-Colinet (1992) 35–39. For houses and religious architecture at Dura-Europos, Palmyra, and the Near East, p. 69, nn. 75–76 and p. 87, nn. 200–1.



FIGURE 7.3 Temple Tomb 86 at Palmyra (photo by author)

Odainath's deputy Septimius Worod or to an older relative of the same name.⁶⁹

Zenobia probably laid Odainath to rest in such a tomb. Its peak of popularity was after the mid-2nd century.⁷⁰ Some have noted the possibility that a prominent temple tomb (Tomb 86) at the western end of Palmyra's colonnade street is Odainath's resting place (Fig. 7.3*).⁷¹ The tomb's foundation inscription is gone. But it is an intriguing theory. Partially reconstructed by archaeologists,⁷² the tomb is uniquely placed. The Palmyrenes normally buried their dead outside the city, presumably due to beliefs in pollution.⁷³ But this tomb was enmeshed in Palmyra's

⁶⁹ For Tomb 36, Schmidt-Colinet (1992), esp. 35–39; al-As'ad, al-As'ad, and Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 299–302; De Jong (2017) 219. For small finds and skeletons, see Schmidt-Colinet (1992), 141–45. Tomb inscription is *IGLS* 17.1.440.

⁷⁰ Gawlikowski (1970) 50–51, (2005b) 56; Schmidt-Colinet (1992) 42–66 discusses chronology and features. See also Henning (2013b) 16; De Jong (2017) 290–91.

⁷¹ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 127–28. For the particular tomb, Watzinger and Wulzinger (1932) 71–76, pl. 38–44; Gawlikowski (2005b) 55–58.

⁷² Gawlikowski (2005b) 55.

⁷³ De Jong (2017), 34, 148.

civic terrain, as only a few others were.⁷⁴ Perhaps its occupant was very powerful. Maybe he disregarded the principles of equity that Palmyrene elites valued. If this is Odainath's tomb, it may have given his enemies at Palmyra another reason to kill him. But we ultimately do not know where he was buried.

We can infer the décor of Odainath's tomb from numerous examples at Palmyra. Galleries were lined with burial niches. The ceiling was coffered in geometric shapes colored with stucco. Parts of it may have featured portrait busts too.⁷⁵ On a stone bench in a prominent niche, Odainath's sarcophagus featured a banquet.⁷⁶ If Odainath had not commissioned it, then Zenobia did. On the lid, an image of Odainath reclined as though dining on a *klinē* (dining couch). He probably wore the trousers, embroidered tunic, and mantle that he donned in wartime or while traveling in the dry Syrian heat. He had a beard and maybe an oak crown, but absent was the tiara that he bore on tesserae or public statues. He held a drinking cup or bowl. A dagger may even have dangled from his belt (similarly, Fig. 4.4*).⁷⁷ On the sarcophagus lid were images of his household, like Hairan, Wahballath, and of course Zenobia.⁷⁸ His first wife perhaps appeared on it too. Other family members adorned its sides. The banquet scene may reflect beliefs about the afterlife. Or maybe it was simply commemorative. We cannot be sure.⁷⁹ On the front, Odainath may even have worn a Roman toga as he made an incense sacrifice to his gods. Nearby walls featured frescoes made with red, blue, black, green, and yellow dies (some quite rare) and perhaps colored stucco. These portrayed Greek mythic scenes. Or they showed Odainath and his household. Its members would have stood and faced their viewers or reclined on couches as servants attended them.⁸⁰ Otherwise, walls and ceilings sported floral patterns and maybe busts of people circumscribed by medallions.

⁷⁴ Krag (2015) 110–11 discusses other rare tombs on Palmyra's urban terrain. See plans in Schnädelbach (2010), Henning (2013b). I thank Rubina Raja for noting possibly undiscovered tombs underground.

⁷⁵ Colledge (1976) 83–84; Tanabe (1986) no. 183; Henning (2013b) Taf. 13–14, 18–19, 50–51.

⁷⁶ Colledge (1976) 60.

⁷⁷ Schmidt-Colinet (1997) 161–65, Figs. 2, 4, (2004) 193–98, Figs. 7–10, (2009), with al-As'ad and Schmidt-Colinet (2005) 42–47, Figs. 60–66, discusses Fig. 4.4*. On "caravan" dress, see p. 96, n. 25. While daggers are rare on sarcophagus portraits, they become more frequent in the third century. I thank Signe Krag for sharing this information. For oak crowns on statues, Gawlikowski (2016a) 126.

⁷⁸ For sarcophagi, see p. 11, n. 41, and pp. 63–64, nn. 21 and 28.

⁷⁹ Finlayson (1998) 1.12–13; Kaizer (2010b) 25; Piacentini (2005) 253–55.

⁸⁰ Sørensen (2016) 104–16, with al-As'ad (2013) 18, Fig. 7; Buisson et al. (2015); Colledge (1976) 84–87.

One also wonders what the funerary portraits of Zenobia were like. She was alive. But her likeness inhabited Odainath's tomb. On Odainath's sarcophagus, she sat at his feet, a position of eminence and spousal harmony.⁸¹ But this was probably not her only portrait. Her likeness, modeled on 3rd-century conventions, also decorated a loculus intended for her.⁸² She wore a mantle over her tunic. A headscarf and maybe a turban adorned her head. Her mantle veiled her hair. She wore the articles of jewelry that displayed her household's wealth and her husband's trust. She even raised her hand to her shoulder or veil in modesty (Figs. 5.1–5.2).⁸³ In this way, her portraits commemorated Odainath's generosity as her husband. They displayed her value as his household's matron. But funerary reliefs sometimes featured reclining women, often as part of domestic scenes. So Zenobia perhaps had a relief that portrayed her as reclining, just as Odainath did on his sarcophagus lid.⁸⁴ She maybe even had herself portrayed as banqueting, a scene virtually unprecedented for Palmyrene women. Such a portrait befitted an acting head of household and an imperial ruler

Zenobia expected to be buried in Odainath's tomb. Married matrons often rested with their husbands, whereas maidens rested with their fathers or brothers.⁸⁵ Such expectations are even attested in burials at modern Tadmur too.⁸⁶ But departed Palmyrene women also rested with natal households, and many factors governed where they could be entombed.⁸⁷ Funerary inscriptions hint at this. Some specify that only male descendants were to be buried in tombs or funerary niches.⁸⁸ These are unusual. Most do not prohibit daughters and granddaughters from resting with their natal kin. One man explicitly built a tomb for his daughters' burials.⁸⁹ Altogether Palmyrene women could variously expect to be buried with either their marital or natal household. In Zenobia's case, we can surmise that she expected to lie with Odainath for dynastic purposes. It did not happen.

⁸¹ Finlayson (2008) 112, (2014) 247.

⁸² For portraiture and references, see pp. 4–5, nn. 14–18, p. 11, nn. 37–41 and p. 64, n. 28. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 76; Krag (2016): portraits of living people.

⁸³ Heyn (2010) 635–36 describes pose.

⁸⁴ Krag (2016) 190–91; Schmidt-Colinet (1992) 45a; 72a, c, e; 73b.

⁸⁵ Saito (2013). Yet, Krag and Raja (2016) 143–44.

⁸⁶ Saito (2013) 291.

⁸⁷ I thank Signe Krag for sharing her expertise and forthcoming work.

⁸⁸ See, for example, *IGLS* 17.1.445, 473, 475, 477, 518, 530; Cussini (2005a) 30.

⁸⁹ Such as in *PAT* 0002.

In Odainath's tomb, intimate rites were performed. Zenobia and her children would replicate them until forced from Palmyra in 272. Lit oil lamps created light in the tomb's darkness. These were left at his sarcophagus. Incense was burned on an altar; libations of perfumed oil and wine were poured. A banquet may even have been held. At a certain point, Zenobia and those with her raised their arms and prayed. Grave goods were not often left with Palmyrene men.⁹⁰ But women were accompanied beyond death by their accessories. If Zenobia had died at Palmyra, she would have rested with rings, earrings, necklaces, bracelets, pendants, containers made of glass, metal, or leather, and maybe even a mirror.⁹¹ But this was not to be. Before departing Odainath's tomb, Zenobia perhaps had a lamp left in his sarcophagus to light his way.⁹² Her funerary obligations fulfilled, she left Odainath to govern her empire.

Such were Zenobia's acts of piety toward her dead husband. She presumably conducted them for her stepson Herodian Hairan too, whatever their living relationship had been like. Now in her late 20s or so, she was a grieving widow. But she also had a real fight on her hands. She had to confront a hostile imperial court and its Palmyrene collaborators. She had to protect her children. How she did so is the topic of the next chapter.

⁹⁰ We can infer funerary activities from finds of glass containers, earthenware vessels, bowls, and pots (graves); lamps and incense burners (tombs); basins and wells (tomb entrances). Gawlikowski (1970), esp. 177–81; Kaizer (2010b); Saito (2005a), (2013); Piacentini (2005) 256; Saliby (1992) 286–88; Krag (2015) 113–14; al-Hariri (2013); Higuchi and Izumi (1994), esp. 71–106; Higuchi and Saito (2001) esp. 118–45; now De Jong (2017) 292–93. The tomb, sculptures, and ceramic vessels at Shash Hamdan offer some perspective. Clarke et al. (1998).

⁹¹ Women's grave goods: Saito (2005a), (2013); Witecki (1994); Higuchi and Izumi (1994) 71–106; al-As'ad (2013) 15–24. For tombs and grave goods, see n. 90.

⁹² For lamps and other finds in tombs, see n. 90.

PART IV

Shooting Star

Dynasty

We do not know where Zenobia was when Odainath was murdered. Perhaps she was in Palmyra. Or maybe she was with him. But wherever she was, Zenobia found herself in peril. We marvel at her regal profile and political acumen. But Zenobia was also a mother. Odainath's assassins had not gotten to her and Wahballath. Perhaps it was an oversight. Maybe it was a lapse in execution. But if their goal was to suppress Odainath's dynasty, then they planned to kill Wahballath too.¹ If Zenobia did not seize power, she could not protect him.

Now a widow, Zenobia must have moved quickly to suppress the Palmyrene conspirators. Syncellus claims that Odainath's retainers (*doryphoroi*) killed his assassin and transferred power to her. She presumably earned the rapid support of Odainath's army and key members of his staff.² In keeping with Palmyrene custom, Zenobia had also assumed jural authority over Odainath's household. None of Odainath's surviving sons were adults. He apparently had no living brothers. So Zenobia was managing Odainath's estate for their common children. This served as a critical foundation for her authority. She could invoke obligations to Wahballath, Odainath's sole surviving male heir and successor. But many Palmyrenes also believed that Odainath's household legitimately ruled the Roman East. Since Zenobia was now its guardian, they accepted that she would make civil and domestic decisions for Wahballath. Zenobia also had her own connections. She surely recruited anyone she could from her natal household and extended family too. Most details evade

¹ Observed by Southern (2008) 81–83, 94.

² Syncellus, 717 (Mosshammer, 467); Southern (2008) 81–83; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 74.

us. But we still catch a glimpse of Zenobia as she responds decisively to harrowing pressure.

So Zenobia began to tread the thin line between preserving dynastic authority and committing insubordination. She had Wahballath proclaimed “king of kings” and *epanorthotēs* of the East. She ceased minting coins with Gallienus’s likeness at Antioch.³ Zenobia apparently sent an embassy to Gallienus that charged one of his courtiers with Odainath’s murder. But Gallienus was not sympathetic to Zenobia. He sided with his Balkan officers.⁴ They killed him months later anyway.⁵

Such was Zenobia’s activity as the spring of 268 gave way to summer. Then Claudius II became emperor. As we surmised in Chapter 7, he was resolutely opposed to Odainath’s dynasty and involved in Gallienus’s death. He also rejected Zenobia’s claims of legitimate governance and dismissed her belief that she could make Wahballath *epanorthotēs* without his consent. So he classified her as a usurper. His court may even have circulated rumors that she had conspired in Odainath’s death. Not surprisingly, Claudius planned to suppress Zenobia’s dynasty.

So Zenobia faced huge challenges to her authority. She had to confront the acrimony of Claudius and then his successor Aurelian. As a figure of Roman governance, she also had to manage her splinter of the Roman Empire and its diverse members.⁶ We can learn much about her by pondering how she confronted these challenges. Let’s glimpse Zenobia as she does so.

Women in Power

In its obsession with Zenobia’s “manly” qualities, the *Historia Augusta* claims that Zenobia modeled herself on Cleopatra VII and other powerful women. As it reports in separate passages:

In fact, a foreigner (*peregrina*) named Zenobia . . . who boasted of being from the line of the Cleopatras and the Ptolemies . . . governed longer than her womanly sex allowed.⁷

³ See pp. 150–51, n. 40 and p. 172, n. 47.

⁴ See pp. 147–48, nn. 25–29.

⁵ See p. 149, n. 32.

⁶ For Zenobia’s realm as “Teilreich” of the Roman Empire, which informs my overall perspective, see Hartmann (2001), esp. 448–66.

⁷ HA TT 30.2.

Bringing them [her sons] to public meetings, which she frequented as though a man, she proclaimed Dido and Semiramis and Cleopatra to be the originator of her line, among other things.⁸

We will return to Dido, Semiramis, and Cleopatra in a moment. But as always, the *Historia Augusta* may just be recycling literary tropes. A contemporary of its author criticizes Parthians, Egyptians, and Palmyrenes for celebrating Semiramis, Cleopatra, and Zenobia.⁹ But it is also instructive. We can detect a palpable tension between Palmyrene customs and conventional Roman biases. We have seen how Palmyrene women could assume jural authority over their husbands' household.¹⁰ So Zenobia became the guardian of Odainath's household and realm. But Romans believed in the frailty of women. So the *Historia Augusta* frames Zenobia's governance as transgressive and odd, if effective. It also assumes that she imitated "manly" women rulers of antiquity.¹¹ But despite its biases, its claims may have merit. Zenobia would have emulated powerful or inspirational women. Some of these were ancient and even mythical. Others were more recent. Many had links to the Near East. Let's contemplate who they were.

We can begin with the Severan women from Syrian Emesa. These were influential at the Roman imperial court. They provided images of stability that the imperial administration circulated, especially on coins.¹² Iulia Domna had been the wife of Septimius Severus (193–211) and the mother of Caracalla (211–217).¹³ Before marriage, Zenobia had been named "Iulia" after her. But Zenobia enjoyed a better fate.¹⁴ Some sources claim that Caracalla had his brother Geta murdered right in front of her. She killed herself after Caracalla also met his violent end.¹⁵ Domna had a sister named Iulia Maesa. As we will see, she was pivotal in elevating "Elagabalus" and then his cousin

⁸ HA TT 27.1.

⁹ Ammianus, 28.4.9; Teixidor (2005) 201.

¹⁰ See p. 35, n. 8, p. 77, n. 143, and p. 126, nn. 94–95.

¹¹ For discussion of Zenobia and gender in HA Aur. 22–34, see Jones (2015); Watson (1999) 66, 85–87.

¹² Hekster (2015) 143–57 discusses this subject; Southern (2008) 93 describes Zenobia's emulation of Severan women.

¹³ Levick (2007).

¹⁴ See p. 210, nn. 103–5.

¹⁵ Levick (2007) 89–90, 104–6.

Severus Alexander to imperial power. Zenobia presumably knew who they were. She also may have mimicked the imperial women who adorned contemporary coinage. But their moments as empress were often fleeting. Their emperors usually died shortly after the coins were minted.¹⁶

A key Severan that Zenobia arguably emulated was not a woman. But hostile Romans called him one. This was Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, known to history as “Elagabalus.” Elagabalus’s mother was Iulia Soaemias, a niece of Septimius Severus and daughter of Iulia Maesa. The son of a Roman equestrian, he apparently spent much of his life at Rome or the imperial court. Perhaps he was even a latecomer to the cult for Elagabal, a solar deity that Emesenes worshipped as a black conical meteorite. But by 217, Elagabalus had become the priest of Elagabal at Emesa. Aided by Maesa, soldiers at Emesa proclaimed him Augustus in 218. A teenage emperor, Elagabalus then traveled to Rome, where he eventually vaunted Emesa’s god in public.¹⁷

We have already witnessed Zenobia in procession. At Zenobia’s Palmyra, some processions involved a camel that bore a portable shrine. But others featured cult images or stones being carried in chariots.¹⁸ These, too, were Arabian traditions that Emesenes practiced. So in Elagabalus’s religious processions, his god rode in a horse-drawn chariot.¹⁹ Elagabalus escorted him while dancing to the music of Syrian cults. He eventually minted coins bearing his god’s likeness.²⁰ We can surmise that his cult was popular in Rome. It may have played no role in his demise.²¹ But it offended certain senators, who accused him of the alleged excesses of tyrants and Syrians. We cannot verify most such rumors, but the surviving sources repeated them as gospel.²² One scathing report even alleges that Elagabalus considered becoming a eunuch. But being soft, he settled for circumcision.²³ By 222, a rival political faction had gotten the upper hand. Praetorian troops killed Elagabalus and Iulia Soaemias. They made his cousin Severus Alexander emperor. Maesa had defected by then. But 3rd-century imperial politics were a

¹⁶ For coins, see *RIC* 4.1–3, 5.1–2; Hekster (2015) 143–57.

¹⁷ Icks (2012).

¹⁸ Dirven (1998) Figs. 2–3, (1999) Fig. 19; Finlayson (2013) Fig. 4; Tanabe (1986) no. 155.

¹⁹ Herodian, 5.6.7.

²⁰ *RIC* 4.2 (Elagabalus).

²¹ Kemezis (2016).

²² Icks (2012) 9–122.

²³ Cassius Dio, 80[79].11.

vicious cycle. Severus's mother Iulia Mamaea, too, would witness her child die, and she would die with him.²⁴

Elagabalus may have worshipped Elagabal only late in his short life. But he and Zenobia had much in common. Palmyra and Emesa, being neighbors, had been settled by Aramaeans and Arabians.²⁵ Their customs had an impact on the religious worlds that Elagabalus and Zenobia cherished. The worship of sacred stones was one of them. A relief from the threshold of Emesa and Palmyra celebrates Elagabal and the Palmyrene god Arsu. It bears Aramaic inscriptions with Palmyrene letters.²⁶ Both Elagabalus and Zenobia were also Romans who embraced Syrian and Arabian practices. As emperor, Elagabalus even promoted Emesa, already a *colonia*, to "mother colony."²⁷ So he conceived of Emesa as a Roman community even while it harbored an array of Near Eastern customs. We have witnessed how Odainath gave Palmyra the same status decades later. Finally, Roman authors regarded Elagabalus and Zenobia to exemplify how Syrians flouted proper gender roles. For them was a womanly man, and Zenobia was a manly woman.

But Elagabalus and Zenobia shared an additional trait. They represent how Emesenes and Palmyrenes were forging links to a Phoenician past by the early 3rd century. This phenomenon had roots in the activity of Septimius Severus, a Phoenician speaker from Lepcis Magna in North Africa.²⁸ He integrated Emesa and Palmyra into the Roman province of Syria Phoenice. Moments ago, we witnessed how he married Iulia Domna of Emesa. But Emesa was not a traditional Phoenician city. Severus reportedly had Phoenician ancestors. By placing Emesa in Syria Phoenice, he could boast of a Phoenician wife. As Roman authorities categorized Emesenes and Palmyrenes as "Phoenicians," certain locals bought into it. The Emesene writer Heliodorus described himself as a Phoenician.²⁹ Elagabalus, Severus's grand-nephew, thought similarly. So he married Elagabal to the statue of a goddess at Carthage.³⁰ The Palmyrenes themselves raised statues for the first governor of the

²⁴ Icks (2012) 37–43 treats Elagabalus's death. For Mamaea's death, Hdn. 6.9.6–7.

²⁵ Millar (1993) 301–2; Icks (2012) 44–59.

²⁶ Starcky (1975–1976).

²⁷ Millar (2006) 202–3; *Dig.* 51.15.1, 8; *BMC Syria*, 239–41.

²⁸ Birley (1999) 35, 114; Millar (1993) 118–22, 305–9.

²⁹ Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 10.41.4.

³⁰ Herodian, 5.6.4; Cassius Dio, 80[79].12.

“Phoenicians.”³¹ We will momentarily encounter Zenobia’s connection to Palmyra’s “Phoenician” heritage.

We can place Zenobia within an enduring tradition of women rulers in the Near East. They governed before Zenobia, and after her. Some were Arabian women.³² Iskallatu ruled in the early 7th century BCE; she was captured by the Assyrian king Sennacharib I. In the 4th century CE, Mavia led an Arabian tribe allied with Rome. But she staged a revolt against the emperor Valens, probably in 377–378. After raiding Syrian territories, she made a treaty with Rome and married her daughter to a Roman general.³³ Centuries later, a wife of Mohammad named Ayisha apparently became a key player of the early Caliphate.³⁴ Zenobia did not know about these rulers. But her jural authority and power were perhaps a living Arabian tradition that they shared.³⁵

One woman whom Zenobia reportedly emulated was Semiramis. The historical kernel for her is Sammu-ramat, an Assyrian queen of the c. 800 BCE.³⁶ But more recent Greek narratives shaped Zenobia’s understanding of her. These conflated Syrians, Assyrians, Aramaeans, and Babylonians, and their queens, to create a largely fictive Semiramis. So Semiramis became famous as a queen of Babylon. She also allegedly prohibited her subjects from worshipping gods other than her.³⁷ Many Syrians embraced such Greek tales and understood their pasts through them. We have already encountered Lucian’s *On the Syrian Goddess*. It explores how “Assyrians” could integrate Greek histories and myths about the Near East into their own practices and beliefs. Being a Syrian, Zenobia probably conceived of herself as a successor to the ancient Assyrian queen. But the Semiramis whom she emulated was based on Greek literature.

The figure of Dido was even more remote. She was the mythical queen of early Carthage immortalized by Vergil’s *Aeneid*. By Zenobia’s lifetime, Greek and Roman tales had largely shaped her reputation. These defined her as an ethnic Phoenician from Tyre. The Phoenicians certainly settled North Africa and the western Mediterranean. But what is

³¹ *IGLS* 17.1.193–94.

³² Finlayson (2005) 62, n. 2, (2013) 247; Yon (2002–2003) 217–18.

³³ Pritchard (1969) 291; Iskallatu; Lewin (2007) 246–50; Mavia. Rufinus, *HE* 11.6; Socrates, *HE* 4.36; Sozomen, *HE* 6.38; Theodoret, *HE* 4.20 are the sources.

³⁴ Watt (2012).

³⁵ As observed by Finlayson (2005) 62, n. 2, (2013) 247.

³⁶ Dalley (2013) 121–24; Lightfoot (2003) 351–57.

³⁷ Herodotus, 1.184; Lucian, *DDS* 14 and 39.

debatable is whether they had an ethnic consciousness.³⁸ The Palmyrenes were not ethnic Phoenicians. But we have just learned how they were Phoenician by provincial affiliation. If Zenobia linked herself to Dido, it was in part because they both, in a sense, governed Phoenicians.

Naturally, the *Historia Augusta* states that Zenobia modeled herself on Cleopatra VII, claimed descent from her, and wrote an epitome of Alexandrian history.³⁹ It sometimes even calls Zenobia Cleopatra.⁴⁰ We can hardly do justice to Cleopatra, the subject of much biographical literature.⁴¹ Arguably the most famous woman of antiquity, she was the final Ptolemaic ruler of Egypt. She also bore children with both Julius Caesar and Marcus Antonius. Zenobia may have gravitated toward her fame. But after claiming Egypt in 270, she presumably tightened her connections to the notable queen. This may explain why the *Historia Augusta* states (perhaps misleadingly) that Zenobia knew Egyptian and used dinnerware once owned by her.⁴²

For Zenobia, the remote past and contemporary circumstances provided her with powerful women to emulate. Many such women were Near Eastern dynasts. But their reputations had been shaped by Greek and Roman literary traditions. Some of Zenobia's models were recent Syrian women (and Elagabalus) who played key roles in Roman imperial politics. But of all the women who perhaps inspired Zenobia, Cleopatra alone had waged civil war against Roman authorities. Even then, she had been allied with a Roman triumvir. In 270 CE, Zenobia would wage her war, alone.

Zenobia's Campaigns

Despite the fame of Zenobia's military offensives, the sources are light on details about them:

Pursuing greater ambitions, Zenobia sent Zabdas into Egypt, for an Egyptian man named Timagenes was grasping power over Egypt for the Palmyrenes.⁴³

³⁸ The articles of Quinn and Vella (2014).

³⁹ HA TT 27.1; HA TT 30.2, 22; BNJ 626.

⁴⁰ HA Probus 9.4–5.

⁴¹ Roller (2010); Schiff (2010) are useful and balanced.

⁴² HA TT 30.19; BNJ 281 T1a (commentary); Southern (2008) 93, 116.

⁴³ Zos. 1.44.1.

So does Zosimus claim that ambition drove Zenobia to fight the Roman imperial court. The *Historia Augusta*, too, casts her as ambitious. These sources could be right. Zenobia's ventures were bold. But ascribing these ventures to ambition is too simple. They reflect how Zenobia dealt with immense political challenges.⁴⁴

We know nothing specific about negotiations between Zenobia and Claudius II. But their basic positions can be inferred from their activity between 268 and 270. For these first two years, Zenobia maintained the status quo. She even governed less territory than Odainath. Zenobia simply stabilized the eastern frontier and asserted Wahballath to be a legitimate Roman governor. As his mother, she ruled on his behalf.⁴⁵ Evading any title suggesting that Wahballath was a Roman emperor,⁴⁶ she had only declared him "king of kings" and *epanorthotēs* (Latin: (*cor*)*rector*; Palmyrenean: *mtqnn*) of the East, just like his father.⁴⁷ Zenobia also did not mint coins with Wahballath's name or likeness. At Antioch, only Claudius was so treated.⁴⁸ The premise was that Wahballath had inherited his father's powers and titles. So Zenobia did nothing to suggest a breach with the Roman court.

But for Claudius's court, such an arrangement was unacceptable. He or his courtiers had probably plotted Odainath's assassination under Gallienus. He certainly denied that Wahballath could inherit his father's powers and titles or that Zenobia could exercise legitimate governance. As we have witnessed, he apparently dispatched an army under his prefect Heraclianus against Zenobia, probably in late 269 (or early in 270). This failed expedition sent a clear message. Any arrangement between Odainath and Gallienus was now defunct. Claudius planned to control Odainath's territories and to end his dynasty's rule. Despite Heraclianus's failure, he even assumed the title *Parthicus Maximus*. This cast Zenobia as a foreign despot.⁴⁹ His hands were tied by conflicts with the invading Goths and the Gallo-Roman Empire. But his intentions were clear.

⁴⁴ Southern (2008) 102; Judith Weingarten, <http://judithweingarten.blogspot.com/2007/01/why-did-she-do-it.html>.

⁴⁵ Hartmann (2001) 259–77, 465 provides details. See also Southern (2008) 101.

⁴⁶ Hartmann (2001) 242–45 (first phase).

⁴⁷ *PAT* 0317; Southern (2008) 83–86.

⁴⁸ Huvelin (1990); Bland (2011) 138–39.

⁴⁹ Hartmann (2001) 244, 258; Southern (2008) 85, 90; Potter (2014) 262–63 treat the imperial court's perspective. See p. 150, n. 37 for title.

In response, Zenobia opted for an offensive.⁵⁰ We can see why. If war was inevitable, Zenobia wanted to control strategic points, eastern imports, and a vast tribute-paying population. When she first took power, she probably had the Syrian provinces. She perhaps held upper Mesopotamia too.⁵¹ She had an army, tax revenues, and Palmyra's caravan wealth. But the Roman imperial court outstripped her in power and resources, despite its weakened control and a severe metal shortage.⁵² So Zenobia decided to level the playing field. In the spring of 270, she made her move.

But by warring Zenobia was also trying to coax the imperial court to bargain with her. In the two years that followed, she did not promote herself or Wahballath to Augusti. She minted coins that portrayed Wahballath in a laurel wreath crown (Figs. 8.1–8.2). But at Antioch she subordinated him to the Roman emperor, who was depicted as radiate (his head emits rays).⁵³ Even after seizing Claudius's territory, she apparently believed that an agreement was possible. She and Wahballath would govern the East for the Roman imperial court, just like Odainath. She was ostensibly justified in her hopes. The imperial court was dealing with other serious problems. Zenobia's invasions would weaken it further. Restoring the reciprocity that Gallienus and Odainath had forged could work best for all. But if anything, Zenobia's offensive had the opposite effect. In the brief span left in his life, Claudius did not accept any conciliatory gestures. His successor Aurelian did not either.

Arabia must have been the first province that Zenobia claimed, probably in early 270.⁵⁴ She could not easily enter Egypt without securing it. Arabia's governors and commanders had once obeyed Odainath. But after his death, they had apparently remained loyal to the Roman court. They may have even been preparing for Zenobia's offensive. Fortifications were built at Adraha, in Arabia, around this time. But these probably reflect the increased activity of Arabian nomads.⁵⁵ The Tanukh were in lower Mesopotamia and perhaps the Syrian steppe.

⁵⁰ Southern (2008) 102; Winsbury (2010) 78, 87.

⁵¹ Hartmann (2001) 263–65.

⁵² See pp. 116–17, nn. 25–28.

⁵³ Hartmann (2001) 250–51; Southern (2008) 102, 106 inform present discussion. Also see Bland (2011) 141–42, with a different understanding.

⁵⁴ Hartmann (2001) 279–81; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 97–99; Southern (2008) 106–10 inform the following.

⁵⁵ Teixidor (2005) 230; Hartmann (2001) 82–85; Equini Schneider (1993) 66–68; Speidel (1977) 724–25. See Pflaum (1952), *IGLS* 14.8–21 (generally) for inscriptions.

Certain sites in Arabia, especially Umm al-Jimal, suffered contemporary destruction. Local conflicts or Zenobia's invasion may have been responsible.⁵⁶

The main Roman garrison in Arabia was at Bostra. It consisted of the Third Legion Cyrenaica and auxiliaries.⁵⁷ Located right where Syria Phoenice and Arabia met, Bostra was also a key administrative center. An inscription indicates that the Palmyrenes destroyed a temple for Jupiter Hammon there. This was the legion's primary divinity.⁵⁸ Its destruction suggests that the Palmyrenes had to fight to take the city. Malalas even provides a skeletal account of Zenobia's victory over an opposing army in "Arabia." By "Arabia," he either means the province (or later, provinces) or Zenobia's territory.⁵⁹ Perhaps predictably, the legion would align with Aurelian at the first opportune moment. It would also rebuild its temple after Zenobia's defeat. But for now the Palmyrenes were victorious. They were having milestones inscribed in Arabia as 270 closed.⁶⁰

Later Arab legends add another dimension. Written in the 8th–10th centuries, they abound with layers of fiction.⁶¹ But an historical stratum seems to pit Zenobia against Jadhimah and his nephew 'Amr ibn Adi, rulers of the Tanukh and Lakhmid tribes respectively.⁶² A Greek and Nabataean inscription from north Jordan suggests that Jadhimah and the Tanukh were real.⁶³ The site where it was found noticeably suffered destruction in the late 3rd century.⁶⁴ A recently discovered Sabaeen inscription from south Arabia places the Tanukh in lower Mesopotamia and the Lakhmids farther west.⁶⁵ The Persian king Narseh identifies 'Amr ibn Adi as a Lakhmid client dynast.⁶⁶ The son of this figure, Imru al-Qays, became a Lakhmid king too. An Arabic inscription of 328 confirms it.⁶⁷

⁵⁶ Hartmann (2001) 280; Equini Schneider (1993) 68–69; Parker (2006) 2.538–41; Macdonald et al. (2015) 29–30; Scharrer (2010) 310–12, 326; Hoyland (2009) 389–90; Toral-Niehoff (2014) 48–49. For a key Sabaeen inscription, see Schiettecatte and Arbach (2016), with Sommer (2017) 166. Nakamura (1993) 135 notes possible destruction at Petra.

⁵⁷ Speidel (1977). The legion had a detachment at Hegra. Al-Talhi and al-Daire (2005).

⁵⁸ See p. 224, n. 60.

⁵⁹ Malalas, 12.28 in Thurn (2000) (12.27–28 consistently calls Odainath's territory "Arabia").

⁶⁰ For references, see n. 85.

⁶¹ Hartmann (2001) 332–43; Equini Schneider (1993) 45–46; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 95–96.

⁶² Recounted notably by al-Tabari in Perlmann (1987) 138–50. See p. 225, n. 63.

⁶³ PAES 3.A.238 and 4.A.41; Hartmann (2001) 343; Macdonald et al. (2015) 29–30, with some reservations.

⁶⁴ De Vries (1986) 237–38.

⁶⁵ Schiettecatte and Arbach (2016) 182, 188, with Sommer (2017) 266.

⁶⁶ Humbach and Skjaervo (1983) 71 (section 92); Hartmann (2001) 344; Lewin (2007) 244.

⁶⁷ Beeston (1979) 1–6; Hartmann (2001) 348–49; Lewin (2007) 245.

So the legends point to conflict between Zenobia and the Tanukh in north Arabia. The Tanukh probably aligned with Aurelian against her.⁶⁸

Of all the provinces that Zenobia claimed, Egypt was the prize. The Nile River teemed with grain that fed Rome. Ships brought goods from the Indian Ocean to Red Sea ports. From there, they traveled overland to Coptos and down the Nile to Alexandria.⁶⁹ The trade generated huge revenues. A quarter of all profits entered state coffers.⁷⁰ We have already witnessed how Palmyrenes had relocated to Red Sea Egypt. One Palmyrene even dedicated an inscribed wooden tablet in a cave at Socotra.⁷¹ Zenobia could not have known that Red Sea trade was about to hit decades of sharp decline. The Blemmyes had captured Coptos in 268. It was only recovered on the eve of Zenobia's invasion. Aksumite Ethiopians would occupy south Arabian Himyar *c.* 270.⁷² The instability of the 260s was taking its toll too. But the enduring effects were not yet clear.

As we have learned, Zenobia already had sympathizers in Egypt when she dispatched an army commanded by Zabdas, in the summer of 270 or so. It consisted of 70,000 soldiers recruited from Palmyrenes, Syrians, and "barbarians."⁷³ The sources only provide skeletal details.⁷⁴ After winning a battle, the Palmyrenes occupied Alexandria and garrisoned it with 5000 soldiers. They then apparently returned east. But then resistance mounted. Tenagino Probus, Egypt's prefect, was at sea suppressing pirates when Zabdas attacked.⁷⁵ When Probus returned, he ousted the Palmyrene garrison at Alexandria and reclaimed the city. In response, a Palmyrene army seems to have reentered Egypt. After an initial battle, Probus assumed a fortified position at the Nile Delta's southern end. There he made his final, fatal wager. Aided by the aforementioned Timagenes, the Palmyrenes prevailed. Meanwhile,

⁶⁸ Bowersock (1983) 131–42; Southern (2008) 107–8; Hartmann (2001) 280–81, 343–51; Graf (1989) 150; Hoyland (2009) 389–90; Scharrer (2010) 311; Toral-Niehoff (2014) 47–53; for discussion and critique.

⁶⁹ Sidebotham (2011) 126–76, 212–20; Young (2001) 38–78; Tomber (2008).

⁷⁰ Wilson (2015).

⁷¹ See p. 49, n. 102.

⁷² Sidebotham (2011) 221; Nappo (2007); Tomber (2008) 154–70; Southern (2008) 112.

⁷³ Zos. 1.44.1, with *HA Claud.* 11.1–2.

⁷⁴ Zos. 1.44, with *HA Claud.* 11.1–2. Hartmann (2001) 281–94; Southern (2008) 113–14; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 104–9; Potter (2014) 262–64.

⁷⁵ Southern (2008) 113–14; Hartmann (2001) 281–89, with 289–94 linking the destruction of Bruchium to the conflict. On Probus, see Barnes (1978) 168.

Claudius II died at Sirmium. Amid the turmoil, the Egyptians initially issued civil papyri without naming any emperors.⁷⁶ But by December of 270, their texts invoked the joint reign of Wahballath and Aurelian.⁷⁷ Before Zenobia's forces secured Alexandria, coins were briefly minted there for Claudius's successor Quintillus and then Aurelian ("year 1").⁷⁸ But Zenobia was appointing, or at least commanding, her own administrators in Egypt by 271.⁷⁹ Nothing suggests that she ended the grain shipments for Rome.⁸⁰ While fighting the Roman court, she still served the Roman state. But Aurelian was surely hostile.⁸¹

Zenobia seized central Asia Minor too. Her activity there is most mysterious. Only Zosimus comments briefly on it.⁸² But Asia Minor has left few traces of Palmyrene occupation. Its value to Zenobia's strategy is not obvious. Perhaps Zenobia wanted a bulwark between north Syria and her opponents. She surely desired Asia Minor's tribute. But Zenobia probably never controlled its imperial mints, or its revenues, before Aurelian reclaimed it, in early 272.⁸³

Amid her victories, Zenobia demanded greater recognition for Wahballath as a figure of Roman authority. Papyri and coins from Egypt soon bore the regnal years of Aurelian (year 1) and Wahballath (year 4).⁸⁴ Milestones from Arabia and Syria Palestine began to vaunt him as *Vir Clarissimus, Rex, Consularis, Imperator, and Dux Romanorum*.⁸⁵ But Zenobia noticeably avoided the titles *Caesar* and *Augustus*.⁸⁶ She was framing her dynasty as subordinate to the Roman imperial court, even as she waged war against it. Zenobia's coins sent a similar message.⁸⁷ At Antioch, Aurelian wore a radiate crown and enjoyed the title of

⁷⁶ For example, see *P. Oxy* 1544, 2906–7; *SB* 11589. Rathbone (1986) 123; Kreucher (1998) 259–60, 267; Rea (1972) 25. Hartmann (2001) 231–41; Southern (2008) 105–6, 114.

⁷⁷ For example, see *P. Oxy*. 2908, 2921; *SB* 11589. Bureth (1964) 122; Rathbone (1986) 123; Kreucher (1998) 260–61, 267–68; Rea (1972) 25; Estiot (2004) 116–17.

⁷⁸ On this basis, Bland (2011) 140–41 links Zenobia's campaign only to Aurelian's reign.

⁷⁹ Hartmann (2001) 287; Southern (2008) 115; Potter (2014) 263; Winsbury (2010) 167–72.

⁸⁰ Southern (2008) 115.

⁸¹ Winsbury (2010) 89–90, 167–72; Hartmann (2001) 258.

⁸² *Zos.* 1.50.1.

⁸³ Hartmann (2001) 294–96; Southern (2008) 16–17; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 110–11.

⁸⁴ For references, see p. 144, n. 6. Bland (2011) 142; Watson (1999) 68.

⁸⁵ Bauzou (1998) nos. 95–97; Isaac (1998) 70; see **Appendix 3**, 4e. Hartmann (2001) 247–49.

⁸⁶ *O. Mich.* 1006, dated June 271, lists both Aurelian and Wahballath as *Sebastoi*, but it is an anomaly and probably reflects scribal confusion. Youtie and Winter (1951) 176–77; Bureth (1964) 122; Sijpesteijn (1980) 137–38; Equini Schneider (1993) 73–74.

⁸⁷ Hartmann (2001) 245–54; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 91–92; Southern (2008) 105–6, 118; Watson (1999) 66–67 treat this phase and inform my present discussion.



FIGURE 8.1 Antoninianus of Aurelian and Wahballath (ANS 1944.100.32917; courtesy of the American Numismatic Society)

Augustus (Fig. 8.1). His likeness appeared on the technical reverse. On the obverse Wahballath merely appeared with a laurel crown. He was identified as *VCRIMDR: Vir Consularis (or Clarissimus) Rex Imperator Dux Romanorum*. At Alexandria, coins placed Wahballath's image on the reverse and displayed some of his titles in Greek (Fig. 8.2).⁸⁸ On some such issues, he appears with military attire and longer hair. This perhaps made Wahballath resemble Palmyra's gods.⁸⁹ Some bronzes placed harmonious busts of Aurelian and Wahballath on their obverses. Altogether, Zenobia's coin issues demonstrate how she understood her

⁸⁸ Hartmann (2001) 250–54; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 91; Geißen (1974–1983) nos. 3053–63; Estiot (2004) 115–18; Bland (2011) 141–74 (esp. 141–42) for coins, titles, and key observations.

⁸⁹ Schwentzel (2010) 161–62.



FIGURE 8.2 Tetradrachm of Wahballath (bpk Bildagentur/Staatliche Museen zu Berlin/ 18252825/Art Resource, New York)

son's authority. He was his Augustus's governor, just like his father. But he was now much more proximate to the emperor in power and authority, even if he was not his equal, not Augustus.

We have now fixed our gaze at Zenobia at her peak of power. She controlled a vast swathe of Roman territory from Egypt to Anatolia and upper Mesopotamia. Her son was king, *consularis*, and *imperator* (but not Augustus). She was queen (but not Augusta). She had waged war against Claudius II. But Zenobia apparently denied any irreconcilable breach with the Roman court. She instead insisted that she was governing Roman territory on its behalf.⁹⁰ This perception is perhaps one of the most fascinating features of her rebellion. It is an important element of our image of Zenobia.

⁹⁰ Hartmann (2001) 448–66, (2008) 357–78 provides valuable formulation.

Zenobia's Court

In August of 271, Zabdas and Zabbai, Zenobia's chief generals, celebrated Odainath and Zenobia with honorific statues on the Great Colonnade. We have already encountered their Palmyrenean inscription for Odainath, now deceased.⁹¹ The inscription for Zenobia was bilingual. It states:

- Greek: Septimia Zenobia, most illustrious pious queen (*basilissa*). The Septimioi Zabdas, the chief general, and Zabbaios, who is general here, excellent (*kratistoi*), (honor) their lady. The year 582, the month Loos.
- Palmyrenean: The image of Septimia Bathzabbai, illustrious and just queen (*mlkt'*). The Septimioi Zabda, chief of the great army, and Zabbai, chief of the army at Tadmor, excellent (*qrṯṯw'*), raised for their lady. In the month Ab, the year 582.⁹²

The inscription imparts pearls of information. It describes Zenobia as queen or even empress (*basilissa/mlkt'*). A contemporary tessera from Antioch also identifies her as *basilissa*.⁹³ But Zenobia had so far avoided the title of Augusta. Despite her conquests, Zenobia aimed to reconcile with Aurelian.

The inscription also informs us about Zenobia's court. Her generals identify themselves as "most excellent" Roman equestrians (*kratistoi*, Greek for *egregii*). We also discover that Zabdas was Zenobia's senior general. So he had commanded the Palmyrenes' invasion of Egypt. His colleague Zabbai led Zenobia's forces at Palmyra. We presume that the two men were at least the clients of Odainath or Zenobia, if not related to her (their names share common roots with Zenobia's Palmyrenean name Bathzabbai).⁹⁴ They were probably Iulii Aurelii at birth.⁹⁵ But they

⁹¹ See p. 128, n. 103.

⁹² *IGLS* 17.1.57; **Appendix 3**, 4a.

⁹³ Equini Schneider (1993) 98, Fig. 18; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 77, no. 21. **Appendix 3**, 4b.

⁹⁴ Equini Schneider (1993) 30; Teixidor (2005) 201; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 84.

⁹⁵ See p. 42, n. 53.

were now Septimii. We hear no more of Septimius Worod. But Zabdas and Zabbai were not Zenobia's only courtiers.

Zenobia aimed to attract Greek intellectuals. This is no surprise. Some Palmyrenes trafficked in Greek culture. But Palmyra was not an intellectual center like Athens, Pergamon, Alexandria, or Rome. It was also very remote. Most Greek academics who can be associated with Zenobia were Syrians or Arabians. Some of these were connected to their home regions. But they had usually made their careers in Greece.

The most luminous philosopher at Zenobia's court was Longinus, once thought to be the author of *On the Sublime*.⁹⁶ Probably from Emesa, he maintained contact with the renowned Neo-Platonist philosopher Plotinus. But whereas Plotinus thrived at Rome, Longinus maintained a school at Athens. His student Porphyry, from Phoenician Tyre, eventually studied with Plotinus too. Longinus presumably relocated to Palmyra, or Emesa, after the Herulians sacked Athens in 268 or so. Odainath may have invited him just before he died. Longinus in fact composed a speech that praised Odainath. It was still circulating over a century later.⁹⁷ Palmyra was not his intellectual paradise. He struggled to acquire treatises of Plotinus while in "Phoenicia" (presumably Syria Phoenice). At Palmyra, domestic mosaics with Neo-Platonist themes may reflect his presence.⁹⁸ We surmise that he had some influence over Zenobia. The *Historia Augusta* claims that he advised Zenobia in her letter writing. But more important, diverse sources claim that Aurelian had him killed for mentoring her.⁹⁹ As we will see, Aurelian tended to kill civilians with discretion. But he executed Longinus. So Longinus was probably a key presence at Zenobia's court.

A sophist named Callinicus of Petra may have attended Zenobia's court. But this is uncertain. Callinicus was in Athens in the 260s. He could have relocated when the Herulians closed upon it. A later source accredits him with writing a history of Alexandria "for Cleopatra." We have learned how the *Historia Augusta* repeatedly insists that Zenobia was emulating Cleopatra. So some surmise that Zenobia was Callinicus's "Cleopatra." If so (and this is not certain), he presumably composed his history during her occupation of Egypt. Then when she evacuated it, he perhaps wrote

⁹⁶ Janiszewski et al. (2015) 219–22, no. 632.

⁹⁷ See p. 210, n. 108.

⁹⁸ Porphyry, *VP* 19; Southern (2008) 95–97; Stoneman (1992) 129–31; Hartmann (2001) 302–4. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 148–49; Balty (2014) 52–53; mosaics. See p. 71, nn. 92–94.

⁹⁹ *HA Aur.* 30.3; *Zos.* 1.56.

a work praising Aurelian's restoration. In the late 4th century, Libanius claimed that a sophist named Callinicus had died in a city bearing his name.¹⁰⁰ But Callinicum, in Upper Mesopotamia, was certainly not named for him. It is tempting to place Genethlius of Petra, his rival at Athens, in Zenobia's East. But he is obscure.¹⁰¹ So is the Nicomachus described by the *Historia Augusta*. He probably did not exist at all.¹⁰²

Nicostratus of Trapezos is a person of interest, if obscure. According to a single later Roman witness, he wrote a history of Roman affairs from the reign of Philip the Arab (244–249) to Odainath's rise and Valerian's failed Persian campaign. The phrasing of the chronology is intriguing. Normally, we would expect histories that measured time by Roman emperors to invoke Gallienus, not Odainath. Nicostratus was apparently promoting Odainath's legitimacy as ruler of the Roman east. He may have done so while Odainath lived, even if his history may have ended at Odainath's rise to eastern power in 260. But he may have been supporting Zenobia's dynastic authority too. After all, she now governed Odainath's household and realm.¹⁰³

The number of scholars that we can associate with Palmyra is modest. We can place only Longinus securely in Palmyra's vicinity. The rest may have simply been sympathetic to Odainath or Zenobia. Or they lived in Palmyra's conquered territories, from which they often originated. Palmyra did not yet attract intellectuals as Rome, Athens, or Pergamon could. But this did not prevent Zenobia from emulating their academic contexts.

Running Her Empire

Aside from some tenuous statements from the *Historia Augusta*, we know little about Zenobia's conduct at court. A passage from the Palestinian Talmud provides a unique glimpse. But it is overwhelmingly terse:

Zeir bar Hinena was arrested in Saphsupha. Rebbi Immi and Rebbi Samuel went to entreat on his behalf. Queen

¹⁰⁰ *BNJ* 281 T1a (commentary); *FGrH* 1090 T1; Hartmann (2001) 305–6; Southern (2008) 97, 116; Janiszewski et al. (2015) 189–90, no. 549; Janiszewski (2006) 195–224 (with additional speculations).

¹⁰¹ *BNJ* 281 T1b; *FGrH* 1090 T1; Janiszewski et al. (2015) 142–43, no. 413.

¹⁰² *HA Aur.* 27.6. See p. 98, nn. 35–36.

¹⁰³ *BNJ* 98 T1; Hartmann (2001) 306–7; Janiszewski et al. (2015) 262, no. 746; Janiszewski (2006) 92–96; Southern (2008) 97.

Zenobia said to them, “Your Creator routinely performs wonders for you; dispute with him.” A certain Saracen carrying a certain sword entered. He said to them, “Bar Nezer (Odainath) killed his brother with this sword.” Zeir bar Hinena was rescued.¹⁰⁴

The narrative is confusing. It is unclear whether Odainath, or “Bar Nezer,” had killed his own brother or the brother of Zeir bar Hinena. Why Zeir bar Hinena was detained or spared is murky. The motive of the sword-bearing Saracen is obscure.

But even so, the passage is valuable. It hints at how some of Zenobia’s Jewish subjects in Palestine perceived her. Like many people with power, she could behave with arrogance and disdain. But she was reasonable. Other ancient embassies feared the tyrannical impulses of their rulers. When the Jews of Alexandria petitioned Caligula in 40, the unstable emperor conversed with terrified petitioners while fixating on his interior decoration.¹⁰⁵ Zenobia’s rabbis apparently fared much better when they petitioned her in person.

We assume that the normal machinery of government continued to function under Zenobia. But no laws or rescripts of hers leave any trace.¹⁰⁶ Zenobia surely received petitions from diverse subjects. But in our sources, Christians, Jews, and Manichaeans stand out. Let’s consider who these were. We can then understand how Zenobia dealt with them.

Some of Zenobia’s subjects were Jews. They thrived at Antioch and Apamea of Syria, the Galilee of Palestine, Alexandria and Egypt, and Edessa of Upper Mesopotamia. A synagogue excavated at Dura-Europos bears famous frescoes. Jews were convening there as late as 256.¹⁰⁷ They left surviving inscriptions at Palmyra too. One quotes more lines from the Hebrew bible than any other known inscription.¹⁰⁸ These are hard to date with precision. So are the epitaphs for Palmyrenes at Galilean Beth Shearim, the home of a famed Jewish necropolis.¹⁰⁹ The Mishnah

¹⁰⁴ TJ *Ter.* 8:10.46b in Guggenheimer (2000–). Where Guggenheimer reads “at Safsufa,” Appelbaum (2011) 542 has “in a riot.” I check and improved my translation against those of Guggenheimer and Appelbaum, with their commentaries.

¹⁰⁵ Philo, *Gai.* 355–73.

¹⁰⁶ But see p. 183, nn. 115–17.

¹⁰⁷ Kraeling (1956); Stern (2010); *IJO*, Syr. 81–110. For Jews and Palmyra, Appelbaum (2011); Hartmann (2001) 324–32.

¹⁰⁸ *IJO*, Syr. 44, with commentary.

¹⁰⁹ *IJO*, Syr. 51–52, with commentary. For excavations, see Mazar et al. (1973–1976).

describes how a certain Miriam from Palmyra was making a blood offering at the Jewish temple when she received news that her daughter was in danger. She left but could not arrive before her daughter died. Having encountered her daughter's corpse, she had to purify herself before finishing the offering.¹¹⁰ The story circulated by Zenobia's lifetime.

In the centuries before Zenobia's reign, Jews of the Near East had faced great turmoil. In 66, insurgents initiated a serious revolt in Judaea. At its culmination, the Romans sacked Jerusalem and destroyed the Jewish temple in 70. Massive revolts throughout Roman North Africa, Egypt, the Levant, and recently occupied territories in Mesopotamia occurred in 115–117. The formation of a *colonia* of Roman veterans at Jerusalem, which was renamed Aelia Capitolina, incited the Bar Kochba revolt (132–35).¹¹¹ It was violent, but it failed. Throughout Palestine, many ethnic Jews were thereafter integrated into the governing structures of local Greek city-states.¹¹² But certain rabbis asserted themselves as legal experts and guardians of Jewish law and practices. Synagogues increasingly assumed significance in Jewish religious life.¹¹³ Amid the sectarianism, a figure appears in sources (admittedly later) as “the patriarch” (*Nasi*). The Roman government recognized him as a figure of authority over Jewish co-religionists.¹¹⁴ Zenobia's governance required the loyalty of subjects like these.

In a Latin and Greek inscription from an unknown location in Egypt, unnamed monarchs renewed the privileges that a Jewish community had earned from an earlier Ptolemaic king.¹¹⁵ These rulers are described as “queen” (*basilissa/regina*) and “king” (*basileus/rex*). In the Greek inscription, *basilissa* noticeably precedes *basileus*. Some surmise that the famous Cleopatra VII and one of her co-regents were responsible.¹¹⁶ But the letter forms may suggest a much later date. If so, the queen and king were perhaps Zenobia and Wahballath.¹¹⁷

We have already witnessed how “Queen Zenobia” appears in the Palestinian Talmud. Her treatment is relatively favorable. Odainath,

¹¹⁰ Mishnah III *Nashim*, *Nazir* 6.11, in Blackman (1983).

¹¹¹ Eshel (2006).

¹¹² Schwartz (2001) esp. 101–76; Lapin (2012) 34–35.

¹¹³ Levine (2000) esp. 160–606; Magness (2012) 256–319; Magness et al. (2014).

¹¹⁴ Levine (1996), (2012) 443–55; Appelbaum (2012, 2013) 67–117; Lapin (2012) 20–25, 52–55.

¹¹⁵ *CIL* 3.6583=*ILS* 574=*OGIS* 129=Horbury and Noy (1992) no. 125.

¹¹⁶ Teixidor (2005) 210; Horbury and Noy (1992) no. 125

¹¹⁷ Bowersock (1984) 32; Potter (2014) 264; Hartmann (2001) 288–89.

called “Ben Nazor” or “Bar Nezer” after his great-grandfather, fares worse. Whether Jews were hostile to Odainath during his lifetime is unclear. Their views presumably varied. Subsequently, some rabbis talked of him in neutral terms, others in negative ones.¹¹⁸ The stories told about him often involve prisoners that he had taken. Rabbis debated whether these were the hostages of a king or a robber.¹¹⁹ They likened him to “the hand of Esau” and the “little horn” of the beast from the Book of Daniel.¹²⁰ Some midrashic parables may refer to the imperial court’s dependence on his governance, even if not specifying him by name.¹²¹ One describes how a king expected “Matrona” to be honored before he entered a province. This could be referring to Zenobia, the matron of Odainath’s household.¹²² It is hard to be sure. But we have witnessed how Zenobia pardoned a Jewish hostage whose brother had been killed by “Bar Nezer.”¹²³ She also poked fun at the Jewish belief in divine intervention. The account noticeably describes the Palmyrenes as “Saracens,” like the Greek sources.¹²⁴ Rabbis rarely mention Zenobia. Some Jews apparently conceived of her as haughty. But they believed that they could negotiate with her.¹²⁵

Odainath’s heavy hand left a lasting impression. Some Jews who looked askance at Palmyrenes found motivation in his activity, especially at Nehardea in the 260s.¹²⁶ In the Babylonian Talmud, Palmyrene merchants work late into the evening. Their eyes are bleared from their exposure to sand.¹²⁷ More legendary tales suggest serious acrimony. As early as Josephus, Jews had deemed King Solomon the founder of Palmyra. But later rabbis maintained that Solomon, who allegedly could fly to Tadmor on an eagle,¹²⁸ had settled slaves

¹¹⁸ Appelbaum (2011): Memories of Odainath often reflected recognition of his power, but not necessarily hatred. Also see Hartmann (2001) 324–32.

¹¹⁹ *TB Ket.* 51b.

¹²⁰ *Genesis Rabbah* 76.6, from Appelbaum (2011) 532–33 (in Halevi (1985–1989) 1.trpg).

¹²¹ For this material, see Appelbaum (2010) 250–64.

¹²² *Pesiq. Rav. Kah.* 9:10, in Appelbaum (2010) 264, who conceives of Odainath as the king mentioned.

¹²³ *TJ Ter.* 8:10.46b.

¹²⁴ Hartmann (2001) 330–32; Appelbaum (2011) 543.

¹²⁵ *TJ Ter.* 8:10.46b. Hartmann (2001) 40.

¹²⁶ Avi-Yonah (1984) 125–27; Appelbaum (2011) 529, n. 8; Oppenheimer (1983) 445.

¹²⁷ *TB Shab.* 31a; *Yeb.* 17a, in Epstein (1965–1990).

¹²⁸ *Ecclesiastes Rabbah*, 2.25, in Halevi (1985–1989) 7:ḡ’d, with Benjamin of Tudela (Adler (1907) 31, ṭm). Solomon receives similar credit in medieval Arabic authors. Mehren (1874) 273; Le Strange (1890) 540–42; Richards (2017) 72.

there.¹²⁹ Rabbis also impugned Palmyrenes for helping destroy the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem, first with 8000 archers, then with 80,000.¹³⁰ Rabbis even suggested that they had committed atrocities against women as Jerusalem fell.¹³¹ These tales were contrived. No contemporary sources place Palmyrenes at Jerusalem in 70. Palmyra as such did not exist in 586 BCE. But for rabbis these deeds were real. So some assumed that Palmyrene Jews did not have purely Jewish lineages and deemed them unfit for marriage. A few even refused to recognize Palmyrene converts¹³² or celebrated Palmyra's (reputed) destruction by Aurelian.¹³³

Some of Zenobia's petitioners were Christians. Christianity was born in the regions that she controlled. We have already encountered how the burial of Jesus of Nazareth resembled Palmyrene interment. After his burial, his followers proclaimed him the Son of God and the heavenly Messiah. Christian communities took shape throughout Roman Syria.¹³⁴ Antioch was the place where they first called themselves Christians.¹³⁵ Dura-Europos sported the earliest Christian house church ever to be excavated (3rd century).¹³⁶ Around 200, a Phrygian churchman named Abercius traveled among Christian communities throughout Roman Syria and Mesopotamia. He went as far east as Nisibis.¹³⁷ In Edessa, Bardaisan and his students were contemplating the role of fate and agency in the Christian cosmos.¹³⁸ Intriguingly, no trace of a Christian community in Zenobia's Palmyra has been attested.¹³⁹ Perhaps it was too remote. All Christian inscriptions and churches were made after Zenobia's reign.¹⁴⁰

For Christians of Zenobia's territories, the 3rd century was tumultuous. In earlier periods persecutions were sporadic. Only those publicly denounced as Christians were tried by governors. So a north Syrian

¹²⁹ TJ *Ter.* 8.10.46b.

¹³⁰ TB *Ta.* 4.5, in Epstein (1965–1990), with *Genesis Rabbah* 56.11 in Halevi (1985–1989) 1.1sh. Oppenheimer (1986) 442–43; Kaizer (2010a) 117.

¹³¹ TB *Yeb.* 16, in Epstein (1965–1990).

¹³² TB *Yeb.* 16–17, and *Nidda* 56b, in Epstein (1965–1990). Appelbaum (2011) 535–37, 540–41 interprets. But see TJ *Yeb.* 1.6.3a, in Guggenheimer (2000–).

¹³³ TB *Yeb.* 17a, in Epstein (1965–1990). Equini Schneider (1993) 14–15; Appelbaum (2011) 537–40.

¹³⁴ Schwemer (2011).

¹³⁵ Acts 11:26.

¹³⁶ Peppard (2016).

¹³⁷ Ramelli (2000).

¹³⁸ Drijvers (1965); Ramelli (2009).

¹³⁹ Briefly discussed in Andrade (2018) 204–5.

¹⁴⁰ See p. 218, nn. 19–23.

bishop named Ignatius, from Antioch, suffered captivity and death.¹⁴¹ But amid increased instability, 3rd-century Roman emperors demanded that subjects worship the eclectic divinities that protected the empire. The emperor Decius implemented such a mandate for all Roman subjects.¹⁴² Christians who refused suffered violence. In 257, Valerian banned Christian assembly and forced clergy to sacrifice. Death was doled out to the disobedient.¹⁴³ Valerian was captured by Shapur I shortly afterward. But the message was sent. Such a persecutory bent may have made rule by Odainath and Zenobia palatable for Syrian Christians.

Increased persecution did not prevent early Christians from persisting in their internal conflicts.¹⁴⁴ In Syria, disputes regarding the nature of Jesus and how clergy should interact with women enmeshed a certain Paul of Samosata, the bishop of Antioch. His works only survive in fragments.¹⁴⁵ We in theory know of his beliefs from hostile sources and statements preserved from his trial at Antioch in about 269.¹⁴⁶ The bishop thought that priests could cohabit with women. In fact, he maintained them in his retinue. He experimented with composing new psalms. He also believed that Jesus of Nazareth was conceived solely as a human.¹⁴⁷ His opponents demonized him. They asserted that he bullied his rivals and extorted money. They claimed that he adopted the magisterial and public display of a *procurator ducenarius*, an equestrian fiscal officer. They even alleged that his women companions venerated him as an angel.¹⁴⁸

Becoming bishop in 260, Paul must have established connections with Odainath. He was familiar to Zenobia's court. Pamphilius of Jerusalem (6th century) claimed to cite treatises or letters that he wrote to Zenobia.¹⁴⁹ If he is right, then Paul and Zenobia corresponded about the nature of Christ. This communication would have aided Paul. In 268 or early 269, a council at Antioch attracted bishops and churchmen

¹⁴¹ Clarke (2005) and Moss (2012) treat persecutions.

¹⁴² Hekster (2008) 56–73 (esp. 70–73); Ando (2012) 134–40; Potter (2014) 237–40; Ando (2000) 207–9.

¹⁴³ Potter (2014) 251; Hekster (2008) 74–75; Ando (2012) 140–41.

¹⁴⁴ Erhman (2016) treats early Christians.

¹⁴⁵ Declerck (1984) 116–40. On Paul, Millar (1971); Hartmann (2001) 315–23.

¹⁴⁶ For the fragments, see Riedmatten (1952), with 135–68 containing texts. Millar (1971) discusses this topic.

¹⁴⁷ Eusebius, *HE* 7.27 and 30; Riedmatten (1952) 135–58.

¹⁴⁸ Eusebius, *HE* 7.30.7–11. Millar (1971) 12–13; Hartmann (2001) 319 clarify: Paul was not an actual imperial official (though he could have previously held such a position).

¹⁴⁹ Declerck (1984), fragments at 132.

from diverse eastern Roman territories. It deposed Paul.¹⁵⁰ But he had Zenobia's support. Only Aurelian's arrival would drive him from Antioch.

Fourth-century Christians described Zenobia as a Jew.¹⁵¹ A century or so later, a hagiography even reported that Palmyrenes were "Jews called Christians."¹⁵² So scholars have sometimes believed that Zenobia and her Palmyrenes were Jewish converts.¹⁵³ We now understand that Zenobia's relationship with Paul of Samosata, who had denied Jesus' divinity, shaped this pattern.¹⁵⁴ Noticeably, no rabbinic Jewish texts suggest that Zenobia was Jewish. It is best to dismiss the idea. But nothing prevented Zenobia from being interested in Judaism or Christianity.¹⁵⁵

When Zenobia reigned, the Manichaeans were making headway in the Roman Near East. They were preaching in Iran, central Asia, north India, and the Roman Mediterranean too. Manichaeism was born when Mani broke from his Christian sect near the Persian Gulf. Claiming revelations from a heavenly twin, he envisioned a cosmic conflict between light and darkness.¹⁵⁶ He traveled through the Sasanian Empire to preach his message, and he often visited the Persian court. It is alleged that a Palmyrene ship captain even transported him to north India.¹⁵⁷ He intended for his credo to cross all linguistic and social boundaries. So Manichaeism integrated elements of Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, and Jainism.¹⁵⁸ We have learned how Mani's followers perhaps wrote Aramaic in a script derived from Palmyrenean cursive.¹⁵⁹ The Persian court eventually executed him. But Manichaeism lived long after its founder was dead.

According to Iranian texts from central Asia, a Manichaean figure named Adda preached in Roman Syria and Egypt.¹⁶⁰ He even visited

¹⁵⁰ Eusebius, *HE* 7.26–28. For date, see Millar (1971) 11; Hartmann (2001) 318–20.

¹⁵¹ Athanasius, *hist. Arian. ad mon.* 71 (PG 25, 777); Filastrius, *haer.* 64.2 (CCSL 9, 244); Ioh. Chrys. *Ioan.* 8 (PG 59, 66); Theodoret, *haer. Fab. Comp.* 2.8 (PG 83, 393). The Syriac and Arabic authors Barhebraeus and Abul-Pharajius make similar statements. Declerck (1984) 135; Hartmann (2001) 319–21.

¹⁵² *Alexander the Sleepless*, no. 35, in de Stoop (1911).

¹⁵³ Teixidor (2005) 218.

¹⁵⁴ Kaizer (2010a) 118–20; Hartmann (2001) 320.

¹⁵⁵ Millar (1971) 12–13.

¹⁵⁶ Gardner and Lieu (2004) provide documents.

¹⁵⁷ Tubach (1995).

¹⁵⁸ Gardner and Lieu (2004), esp. 109–11; Tongerloo (2005); Gardner, BeDuhn, and Dilley (2015).

¹⁵⁹ See p. 49, n. 110.

¹⁶⁰ Gardner and Lieu (2004) 111–14; translation; Sundermann (1981) 41–45; text. Hartmann (2001) 308–15; Toral-Niehoff (2014) 54–58 discuss Manichaean material.

Tadmor. There a queen called Tadi or Thadamor, once the wife of “Caesar,” kept court. While preaching there, Adda healed the queen’s sister Nafsha of an illness. The tale contains many layers of legend. Odainath was never “Caesar.” But Zenobia seems to be the historical kernel for Queen Tadi/Thadamor. A Coptic text from Egypt also describes how Queen Thadamor received Manichaean visitors.¹⁶¹ These accounts may point to a Manichaean mission to Zenobia’s court. As portrayed, Zenobia’s conduct contrasts with how Manichaeans were thereafter treated by Roman authorities. Diocletian and subsequent emperors banned the sect.¹⁶²

As ruler, Zenobia also initiated certain building projects. The 6th-century historian Procopius accredits her with establishing a city at Halabiyya, on the west bank of the Euphrates River. Zenobia named it after herself.¹⁶³ Most of its fortifications date to the 6th century. The remains at Zalabiyya on the opposite bank were also built in this period. Its name is a corruption of Zenobia’s. Later Arab sources mistook it for her city. But Zenobia may have fortified it to amplify her control of the Euphrates and secure upper Mesopotamia.¹⁶⁴

We can also perhaps find traces of Zenobia’s activity on the Colossus of Memnon. Located near Egyptian Thebes, it attracted Romans with wealth. It had been one of two sandstone colossi built by the Pharaoh Amenhotep III during the 14th century BCE. But for Romans it represented the Homeric hero Memnon, an Ethiopian, and they often inscribed poetic verses into it. By the late 1st century BCE, an earthquake toppled the top half.¹⁶⁵ The statue then emitted a whistling sound at dawn. But sometime during the 3rd century, its upper half was rebuilt with new sandstone blocks. The whistling then ceased.¹⁶⁶ Many have assumed that Septimius Severus restored the statue when he visited Egypt in 199 CE. But graffiti dating to subsequent years make this unlikely.¹⁶⁷ Zenobia is not documented as visiting Egypt. But if she had a Cleopatra fetish and fluency in Egyptian, as the *Historia Augusta* claims,

¹⁶¹ Gardner and Lieu (1996) 153–54, (2004) 114; translation.

¹⁶² Riccobono (1968) 2.580–81; various edicts of CT 16.5.

¹⁶³ Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.8.8–15. See Blétry (2015) for material culture, which is consistent with Procopius’s testimony (for example, 469).

¹⁶⁴ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 93–94, 250; Hartmann (2001) 268–71. Lauffray (1983–1991) for material culture.

¹⁶⁵ Strabo, 17.1.46.

¹⁶⁶ Potter (2014) 264; Bowersock (1984) 21–33. Inscriptions are found in Bernand and Bernand (1960).

¹⁶⁷ Bowersock (1984) 24–25.

her court perhaps traveled there. Or maybe she simply knew about the famous statue and had it restored. Recently published graffiti, however, would suggest that the restoration preceded her rule.¹⁶⁸

Such is our image of Zenobia as she governs her empire. We only catch glimpses. The sources are not ample. But they suggest that she was capable, thoughtful, and at times domineering. But the Roman imperial court condemned her autonomy. If we seek Zenobia's light, Aurelian brought darkness.

¹⁶⁸ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 109–10.

9

Civil War

In early 272, Zenobia's court adopted new titles for her and Wahballath. In Arabia and Syria Palestina, Latin inscriptions on milestones now communicated:

For *imperator* Caesar L. Iulius Aurelius Septimius Vaballathus
Athenodorus, Persicus Maximus, Arabicus Maximus,
Adiabenicus Maximus, pious, lucky, unconquered Augustus.¹

Near Byblos in Syria Phoenice, a Greek inscription reported the following:

For . . . unconquered Augustus (*Sebastos*), and Septimia
Zenobia Augusta (*Sebastē*), mother of [our] eternal [lord]
imperator Vaballathus Athenodorus.²

Zenobia and Wahballath were now *Augusti*. Wahballath also bore the epithets Persicus, Arabicus, and Adiabenicus to celebrate the dynasty's victories over the Persians and their allies. Roman emperors jealously guarded such titles. With this shift, the breach was complete, marking a full usurpation. But it also represented a failure. Zenobia had tried to reach an agreement with the imperial court. She was finally admitting that it was impossible.

When she launched her offensives in 270, Zenobia could not account for the vicissitudes of fortune. In the autumn of that year,

¹ *ILS* 8924=Bauzou (1998) nos. 98, with 99–101; Isaac (1998) 70. **Appendix 3**, 4f. See p. 55, n. 134.

² *JGR* 3.1065=*CIG* 4503b=*OGIS* 647; Hartmann (2001) 355–56, 469 (text and date). **Appendix 3**, 4d. Southern (2008) 105–6, 118–19 informs following paragraphs.

Claudius died of plague. He died just as Zenobia was securing Egypt. Claudius's brother Quintillus briefly succeeded him. But weeks later, the army of the Danube acclaimed a new emperor, who soon had Quintillus eliminated. This was Aurelian: he would irrevocably alter the course of Zenobia's life.

Preparation and Propaganda

In its fabricated letters, the *Historia Augusta* suggests that Aurelian had complicated views on Zenobia. In one letter allegedly written to the Senate, Aurelian states: "she greatly benefited the Roman state by keeping governance of the East for herself and her children. . . ."³ In this passage, Aurelian portrays Zenobia as a brave and formidable leader who defended the empire's frontiers. Even if she disobeyed the imperial court, she still governed admirably. But in another letter, Aurelian attributes her resistance to the imperial court to womanly weakness: "She fears just as a woman, and she fights like a man who is afraid of being punished."⁴ Such are the contradictory images from the *Historia Augusta*.

We cannot trust these details; they are probably pure invention. But even so, we can surmise that the *Historia Augusta*'s forked tongue has roots in Aurelian's court.⁵ So we will ponder the images of Zenobia that it circulated. Then we can glimpse the actual woman whom Aurelian confronted in Syria.

Aurelian's court clearly deemed Zenobia's authority illegitimate and maintained Claudius's hardline stance. Aurelian's goal was to rein in all autonomous dynasts, including the Gallo-Roman emperors. Immensely talented, Aurelian accomplished this tremendous feat but ultimately became another casualty of the 3rd-century's turbulence.

When he became emperor, Aurelian could not deal with Zenobia right away. Germanic peoples had breached the Danube frontier. Aurelian had to oust the Iuthungi from Italy and the Vandals from Pannonia in 270–271. He quashed several usurpations and a serious

³ HA TT. 30.8.

⁴ HA Aur. 26.5. English translations, and thus modern scholarship, usually describe Zenobia as fighting like a woman who is afraid of punishment. But I translate the Latin as critical editions, like Paschoud (2002), usually reconstruct it.

⁵ As Southern (2008) 146 suggests, with Stoneman (1992) 108.

revolt in Rome's imperial mint. It was probably at this point that he abandoned the Dacian provinces north of the Danube.⁶ One wonders about the Palmyrenes there. Some may have remained or relocated elsewhere in the Roman Balkans. Perhaps others returned to Palmyra.⁷ But in the winter of 271, Aurelian assembled his army at the Bosphorus Straits. He planned to march through Anatolia the next spring.⁸

As Aurelian prepared for invasion, his court circulated propaganda about Zenobia. Some of it was borrowed from his predecessor Claudius, and some was perhaps new. The tradition that Zenobia had conspired to kill Odainath probably had its origins here. So do many other traditions that appear in the *Historia Augusta*. This work indulges in fabrication and scurrilous gossip, but it also uses 3rd-century sources, like Dexippus and a certain Philostratus of Athens, or intermediaries who consulted them.⁹ Both Zosimus and the *Historia Augusta* record Zenobia's flight from Palmyra on a camel. This points to earlier sources that they shared.¹⁰ So we can surmise that the *Historia Augusta* sheds light on how Zenobia was being represented by 3rd-century writers, and Aurelian's court.

As we witnessed in Chapter 8, Aurelian could not stomach Zenobia's rule for many reasons. Her unsanctioned bid for power, promotion of Wahballath as an imperial governor, and military campaigns were among them. But another was gender. We have witnessed how Palmyrenes, like modern Bedouin, deemed women capable of governance. So Zenobia exerted jural authority over Odainath's household (*byt'*) and his realm. But therein resided a crucial difference between Palmyrene and mainstream Roman perspectives. The Roman Empire had known its powerful women. But as we have learned, Roman jurists reckoned women too feeble to manage household property without oversight. So many regarded Zenobia's rule a strange anomaly. They praised her for it, but they derided her too.

Both praise and derision found homes in the *Historia Augusta*. We have already learned how it conveys two incongruous images of

⁶ Hartmann (2001) 352–54; Potter (2014) 264–66; Southern (2015) 176–78.

⁷ Gorea (2010) 159.

⁸ Hartmann (2001) 354.

⁹ *BNJ* 99–100 for Philostratus, Dexippus. Also Jones (2011); Mallan and Davenport (2015) 212–14; Janiszewski (2006) 97–109; Bleckmann and Groß (2016) 75–97. See p. 2, n. 5.

¹⁰ Zos. 1.55.1–3; *HA Aur.* 28.2–4. Potter (1990) 305.

Zenobia.¹¹ In some cases, she is a virtuous monarch who governed her realm when the Roman Empire needed it. But in other cases, she is a despotic woman who craved power and exercised unsanctioned rule. Both likenesses, which rendered Zenobia as transgressively masculine and “Oriental” to different ends, would have served Aurelian’s court.¹² One of Gallienus’s killers, Aurelian claimed to be Claudius’s legitimate successor (despite eliminating his brother). So the virtuous image of Zenobia highlighted Gallienus’s failures as an emperor, in contrast with the capable successors who overthrew him. The feeble Gallienus could not compete with her. But it also justified Claudius’s inability to displace her. Focusing on the Goths, Claudius had left the East in Zenobia’s capable hands. Of course, Heraclianus’s failed invasion in 269 posed a problem. So the *Historia Augusta* shifted it to Gallienus’s reign. It also buried Gallienus’s complicity in the successful attempt on Odainath’s life.

The virtuously manly Zenobia presents an intriguing figure. She resists both the Roman emperors and her husband. She only sleeps with Odainath to beget children, once every menstrual cycle. She does not ride in a carriage for women (*pilentum*). She prefers a horse or a manlier carriage (*vehiculum carpentarium*). She marches with her soldiers. She is prudent with her treasury beyond a “womanly standard” (*femineum modum*). She is a restrained drinker. She sometimes enjoys symposia with her generals to promote camaraderie, or with Persians and Armenians to outmaneuver them. She hunts like a Spaniard, and she endures sun and sand like Odainath.¹³ When Aurelian captures her, she argues that emperors like Gallienus could not govern as effectively as she. This Zenobia defies Roman stereotypes of women and Near Eastern peoples. She governs the Roman East with skill while Claudius is committed elsewhere.

But the despotic and manipulative Zenobia craves illegitimate power and dangerously violates the gendered norms of authority.¹⁴ “She fears just as a woman, and she fights like a man who is afraid of being punished.” A usurper complicit in her husband’s death, she claimed imperial authority in defiance of the Roman court. So Roman senators begged the emperor Claudius to save them from her Palmyrenes.¹⁵ This Zenobia is

¹¹ Paschoud (2011) 182–84; Southern (2008) 10–12. For the following paragraphs, I draw inspiration from Casteen (2015) on Johanna I of Naples and her sources.

¹² Jones (2015); Sommer (2015b) 118–23; Watson (1999) 66, 85–87 inform what follows.

¹³ *HA TT.* 15.7–8, 30.17–19.

¹⁴ On this topic, see Jones (2015).

¹⁵ *HA Aur.* 22–29, *Claud.* 4.4.

haughty, arrogant, and desperate to cling to her power. She would even align with eastern people to stay in control. In a fabricated exchange of letters with Aurelian, she boasts of her support from Persians, Syrians, and Armenians. She also callously betrays her supporters to Aurelian to save herself.¹⁶ By circulating this image, Aurelian's court further justified its campaign against Zenobia, before, during, and after the fact.

Meanwhile, Zenobia was claiming legitimacy as a Roman empress. It was probably as Aurelian invaded that Zenobia proclaimed Wahballath Augustus and herself Augusta. Negotiations with Aurelian had failed by early 272. But as long as Zenobia hoped for reconciliation, she had every incentive to avoid this gesture. Once invasion was inevitable, she had no reason to avoid it. But the implications are obvious. Zenobia now governed her own splinter of the Roman Empire as Augusta. She had broken from the imperial court.¹⁷

We do not know when precisely Zenobia became Augusta. We presume that this happened by June of 272.¹⁸ But scholars place the moment at various times: autumn of 271,¹⁹ Zenobia's defeat near Antioch in May/June of 272, or when Aurelian started to invade earlier in the year.²⁰ Zenobia's coinage supports the third scenario. Known dies for Zenobia's earlier coin issues (Figs. 8.1, 8.2) far surpass those for coins promoting her and Wahballath as Augusti (Figs. 1.1–1.3, 9.1). Assuming consistent production, this means that the earlier issues outnumbered the later issues by a vast margin. But the later issues were not minted in a matter of weeks after Aurelian's army had already arrived in north Syria. The coins that proclaimed Wahballath and Zenobia Augusti probably circulated roughly between February and June of 272. Zenobia and Wahballath had assumed the title as Aurelian invaded, and in response to his campaign.²¹

Once she became Augusta, Zenobia crafted and circulated an image of herself as a virtuous imperial woman. So her coins at Antioch (Fig. 1.1) and Alexandria (Figs. 1.2–1.3) bore the title of Augusta in Latin and Greek (*Sebastē*). On their obverses, Zenobia's likeness resembled

¹⁶ See p. 207, nn. 82–83.

¹⁷ Hartmann (2001) 255, 354–64; Southern (2008) 119.

¹⁸ See p. 202, nn. 53–54.

¹⁹ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 99–104.

²⁰ Hartmann (2001) 354–64 (esp. 361–62) treats the theories. See also Southern (2008) 120–21, favoring the third scenario.

²¹ See Bland (2011), esp. 142 on the coins. Hartmann (2001) 361 illuminates.



FIGURE 9.1 Antoninianus of Wahballath (ANS 1944.100.30970; courtesy of the American Numismatic Society)

the likenesses of other imperial women. At Antioch, their reverses featured Iuno Regina,²² who graced many recent coins bearing the portraits of empresses, like Gallienus's wife Salonina.²³ At Alexandria, Zenobia's emissions were dated to "year 5" (ε'). This suggested that she had been Augusta since Odainath's death.²⁴ But coins bearing Wahballath's image far outnumbered those with her image. At Antioch (Fig. 9.1), they featured him with a radiate crown. At Antioch and Alexandria, their reverses displayed the standard Roman gods of his imperial predecessors: Jupiter Stator, Hercules, Venus, Victory, and Virtus. On these coins Wahballath

²² *RIC* 5.2, Zenobia, nos. 1–2; Estiot (2004) 119–20; Bland (2011) 170–72, who doubts the authenticity of the coins with Pietas (172).

²³ *RIC* 4–5 has examples. For Salonina, *RIC* 5.1 (Salonina), esp. Pl. 4 (including no. 4 for Iuno Regina); Geißen (1974–1983) nos. 2955–90. See also p. 5, n. 20.

²⁴ Geißen (1974–1983) no. 3065 (Alexandria); Bland (2011) 142, 175–76; Watson (1999) 68.

bore the titles of Caesar (*Kaisar*) and Augustus (*Sebastos*).²⁵ No trace of Aurelian was on them.

So we can conceive of various images of Zenobia that circulated during the late 3rd century. She was a manly woman who ruled at a time of imperial weakness. She was a despotic usurper who killed her husband and took undeserved power. Both images were probably crafted by the imperial court, to various ends. But Zenobia responded with an image of her own. She was a pious and virtuous Roman empress, and she was legitimate.

Aurelian's Campaign and the Anatolian Phase

In 272, Aurelian's court circulated a story about his conduct at the Cappodocian city of Tyana. The story is recounted by the *Continuator Dionis*.²⁶ The *Historia Augusta* describes it too:

When he had arrived at Tyana and found it closed to him, he reportedly said in anger, "I will not leave a dog in this town." . . . When his soldiers demanded to plunder the city because of his statement that he refused to leave a dog at Tyana, he said in response, "I refused to leave a dog in this city. So slay all the dogs."²⁷

This tale is not easily verified, but it testifies to the image that Aurelian was crafting for himself during his campaign. Moderate and just, he would spare a city that resisted him, even while exposing himself to infuriated troops.²⁸ Through moderation, he hoped to win over Zenobia's subjects. The *Continuator Dionis* specifies that this was his purpose.²⁹

The sources say little about Aurelian's overall strategy. But it can be inferred from the location of key battles, troop musters, and cult sites that Aurelian's staff visited. He was to march his main army across Anatolia and into north Syria. Meanwhile, a smaller army was perhaps to reclaim

²⁵ RIC 5.2, Vabalathus nos. 1–8; Geißen (1974–1983) no. 3064; Estiot (2004) 115–18, 222–23; Bland (2011) esp. 147, 162–70, 175–77. For images and their precedents, Manders (2012) 95–154, 215–23; Estiot (2004) 119–20.

²⁶ FHG 4.197. Potter (2014) 267: Aurelian's court.

²⁷ HA Aur. 22–23.

²⁸ Southern (2008) 134–35; Watson (1999) 71–72; Hartmann (2001) 366–68.

²⁹ FHG 4.197.

Egypt and Arabia.³⁰ Fighting their way into Syria Phoenice, these forces were to join and cut off Palmyra from its links to the Mediterranean coast. Meanwhile, they were to win over Zenobia's former subjects. This explains Aurelian's tendency to spare the inhabitants of conquered cities and his success in attracting new units. As we will see, it also sheds light on why he apparently publicized his links to local divinities.

In the spring of 272, Aurelian's army crossed the Bosphorus at Byzantium and began its march across Anatolia. Zenobia's position there had never been secure. So her army waited in north Syria. As Aurelian moved, city after city admitted him. He easily reclaimed Bithynia and Galatia. It was at Tyana that Aurelian confronted his first challenge.³¹

The residents of Tyana closed their gates. Perhaps they were expecting Zenobia's generals to move north. The *Historia Augusta* conveys several colorful anecdotes about Aurelian's capture of the city. His treatment of dogs is only one of them. According to another anecdote, a collaborator showed Aurelian where the ground's elevation gave access to Tyana's circuit wall. When Aurelian mounted it in his imperial apparel, the awestruck city surrendered. Aurelian then executed the traitor but spared the city. This was when he had to calm his soldiers bent on pillage. He solved the problem by ordering a canine massacre. His army responded with laughter.³²

Another anecdote probably circulated by Aurelian's court features the famed sage Apollonius.³³ We have already encountered Apollonius and his journey to India (see Chapter 4). Tyana was his home city, but Apollonius had been dead for two centuries. As Aurelian's siege commenced, he appeared to Aurelian. A native speaker of Greek, he generously enjoined Aurelian in Latin to spare the city. Mercy would bring Aurelian a long life. Aurelian recognized Apollonius, for he had encountered his cult statues before. He agreed to spare Tyana, and he promised to build temples and statues for Apollonius thereafter. But Apollonius's promise went unfulfilled. Aurelian was killed in a military coup three years later.

This first phase of Aurelian's campaign was a remarkable success. It did not meet serious resistance. But he also had not faced off against

³⁰ See p. 202, nn. 53–54 for Egypt. Watson (1999) 70–72; Southern (2008) 133–35 inform present discussion.

³¹ Hartmann (2001) 364–68; Southern (2008) 133–34 treat the march through Anatolia.

³² *HA Aur.* 22–24; *FHG* 4.197.

³³ *HA Aur.* 24; Potter (2014) 267.

Zenobia's main army. To do this, he would have to enter Syria. Zenobia herself was waiting for him there.

The Fight for Syria

As Aurelian's army entered north Syria, it continued to circulate rumors that the region's gods and heroes had sided against the Palmyrenes.³⁴ The Antiochenes deemed Apollo to be their city's protector. So as the decisive battle loomed, Aurelian claimed his favor. At the city of Seleucia in Cilicia, Aurelian's supporters, if not his staff, consulted an oracle to Apollo. They reported the following message:

Alone to many, a hawk brings an icy wail for
frightened doves. And they tremble at their killer.³⁵

Apollo reportedly did not give the Palmyrenes such an auspicious prophecy. According to Zosimus (and probably Aurelian's staff), they were told:

Get out of my temple, you deceitful ruin-bringing
men, noisome to the splendid line of immortals.³⁶

However contrived, the oracle's predictions proved correct. Zenobia's men were in for a massacre.

As Aurelian approached Syria, his war reached a new phase. He was entering a world whose inhabitants bore serious cultural affinities to the Palmyrenes. Greek civic life and culture were alive in Syria. But so were various Near Eastern cultures that had been cross-pollinating for centuries. Having ceded Anatolia, Zenobia chose to rally the communities of Syria to resist Aurelian. Antioch made sense as the prize of the anticipated fight. A vast city, it was a vital military, economic, and political center. It was the residence of Seleucid kings and then Syria's Roman governors. In the late-2nd century, Avidius Cassius and Pescennius Niger had staged their abortive attempts at imperial power there.³⁷ Odainath and Herodian may have even assumed the title

³⁴ Potter (2014) 267.

³⁵ Zos. 1.57.4. Potter (2014) 267, with n. 53–54; Paschoud (2003) 173–74, n. 85.

³⁶ Zos. 1.57.4; Potter (2014) 267.

³⁷ *HA Avid. Cass.*, 7–8; *Cass. Dio* 72[71].22.17–28; *Herodian*, 2.7.4–8.8, 3.1.1–4.7

of “king of kings” at Antioch, but the premise is weak.³⁸ The city’s strategic value was also ample. It was near vital passes through the Amanus Mountains that separated the Cilician plains from Syria. It is no surprise that Zenobia and Zabdas decided to offer resistance to Aurelian’s advance there.

As noted previously, Zenobia reportedly traveled with her army. But we do not know how routinely she did so. We have learned that Zenobia probably did not accompany Zabdas’s army into Egypt. But as Aurelian invaded Syria, she apparently sought to motivate her troops for the decisive engagement that loomed. She also perhaps aimed to deter Antioch’s residents from defecting. We can place Zenobia in Antioch in early 272 CE. Around this time the city’s imperial mint produced the coins that celebrated her as Augusta.³⁹

The armies clashed near Antioch in late May or June. The sources are undetailed and inconsistent. But most scholars believe that two engagements occurred. The first happened outside the city.⁴⁰ The Palmyrenes, deployed west of a lake northeast of Antioch, awaited Aurelian’s approach. But Aurelian marched along the lake’s east side. He aimed for surprise and choice ground. Zabdas shifted his army east across the Orontes River to confront him. His heavily armored *clibanarii* (as Festus identifies them) were lined against Aurelian’s horsemen. They had greater numbers. But Aurelian’s cavalry feigned a retreat and lured the *clibanarii* eastward. After traveling a great distance, they and their horses were exhausted by the heat and weight of their armor. When Aurelian’s cavalry turned and charged near a place called Immae, they were at the mercy of the merciless. A gory slaughter of sword thrusts and pounding hooves ensued, leaving a bloody mess of mangled corpses and flesh.⁴¹

At Antioch, Zenobia knew she had to act fast. Her conduct in defeat has been recorded in rare detail by Zosimus. To secure her retreat, Zenobia and Zabdas engineered a deceit. Finding an obscure person who resembled Aurelian, they circulated news of a victory and put the counterfeit on display. Before the truth reached Antioch, Zenobia and Zabdas moved southward to Emesa. The trick ensured her escape and

³⁸ Based on a dubious reading of *IGLS* 17.1.61.

³⁹ See p. 195, nn. 19–21.

⁴⁰ Downey (1951); Watson (1999) 72–75; Southern (2008) 135–38 discuss this battle.

⁴¹ Zos. 1.50.3–4, with Fest., *Brev.* 24. Hartmann (2001) 368–70. Only Festus specifies that the Palmyrenes had archers at the battle. See Winsbury (2010) 125.

delayed the defection of its residents. Here we perhaps get our best glimpse of Zenobia's ingenuity, boldness, and daring. But it could not compensate for defeat. Syria now lay open to Aurelian.⁴²

Aurelian and his army entered Antioch. But the Palmyrenes had left a splinter garrison at the suburb of Daphne. The second engagement took place there. The Palmyrenes had fortified the top of a steep, rocky outcropping. Aurelian attacked with cohorts in "tortoise" (*testudo*) formation. Their shields repelled the shower of Palmyrene missiles as they climbed. At close quarters, a gruesome massacre took place. Some Palmyrenes died as they fell from the heights, their bodies battered and ripped on the rocks below. The rest were slaughtered by Aurelian's troops. Antioch and its environs now belonged to the invading emperor.⁴³

Aurelian paused briefly to settle affairs and earn the loyalty of Antiochenes. He spared all its inhabitants, including Zenobia's supporters.⁴⁴ He also, it seems, won over the Syrian churchmen who had condemned Paul of Samosata, whom Zenobia had protected. But Paul's career was finished. His rivals had sent a letter to the bishop of Rome listing his alleged crimes. When Paul refused to surrender Antioch's most prominent church, Aurelian ousted him from it. Meanwhile, Aurelian occupied north Syria and Upper Mesopotamia. Any units remaining there soon defected to his army.⁴⁵

After securing north Syria, Aurelian rapidly pursued the Palmyrene army to Emesa. He occupied Apamea, Larisa, and Arethusa on the way. This move came with risk. The route from Emesa to Palmyra was inhospitable. Aurelian was passing over the more amenable approach to Palmyra from Apamea. But he did not want to expose his forces to the Palmyrene army to the west at Emesa.⁴⁶ Meanwhile, some of Aurelian's forces also occupied Phoenicia and Palestine, including presumably Heliopolis-Baalbek.⁴⁷ They may have been a splinter of his main army. They also could have been troops who had recently recaptured Egypt (or had defected from Zenobia's units there) and had marched

⁴² Zos. 1.51.1–3; Southern (2008) 136–37; Watson (1999) 74.

⁴³ Zos. 1.52.1–2; Hartmann (2001) 371, 388–90; Southern (2008) 138; Watson (1999) 75.

⁴⁴ Zos. 1.51.4–52.1; Watson (1999) 74.

⁴⁵ Eusebius, *HE* 7.30; Millar (1971) 14–16; Hartmann (2001) 321–23; Southern (2008) 138; Watson (1999) 74. For the "old" church, see Mayer and Allen (2012) 100–2. Zos. 1.52.4: military units.

⁴⁶ Zos. 1.52.3–4. I thank Jørgen Christian Meyer for observations on the routes from Emesa and Apamea. Also Hartmann (2001) 382; Southern (2008) 141. For Palmyra's roads, see Bauzou (1989) 207–10; Mior (2014) 175–200.

⁴⁷ I infer this from Zos. 1.52.3–4, 58. Southern (2008) 138.

north through Palestine. Significantly, a road ran between Heliopolis-Baalbek and Damascus. Damascus itself connected Palmyra and Emesa to Palestine, Egypt, and Arabia.⁴⁸ So Aurelian was now isolating the Palmyrenes from virtually all their territory. He also won over any military units remaining in Palestine and coastal Phoenicia.⁴⁹ Some soldiers from Palestine noticeably carried clubs or maces. These were perhaps Germanics already in Aurelian's army⁵⁰ or armed retainers of Jewish elites in Palestine.⁵¹ Or maybe Aurelian had quickly trained recently defecting units for this style of combat. Accustomed to fighting club-wielding Germanic peoples, he had surmised its potential effects on armored cataphracts.

At roughly this time, we hear of another god who defected: Aphrodite at Aphaca. Aphaca was in the mountains between Heliopolis-Baalbek and Phoenician Byblos. According to local tradition, worshippers would deposit offerings of gold, silver, and linen in a lake there. If they gave pleasure, they all would sink, including the linen. If not, all items would float, including the gold and silver. Aurelian's court apparently made contact with its priests and circulated the following rumor. In the preceding year, all the Palmyrenes' offerings had sunk. But as Aurelian campaigned, all their offerings had floated.⁵² At Heliopolis-Baalbek, the gods who inhabited the famously massive temples there probably joined Aurelian's cause too. Having secured the support of Syria's divinities, Aurelian was ready for the fight at Emesa.

By this stage, Aurelian's forces had reclaimed Egypt. It is easy to date this transition. Papyrus documents there bore Wahballath's name as late as April.⁵³ By June, they were being dated solely to Aurelian's reign.⁵⁴ The *Historia Augusta* even accredits the future emperor Probus with participating in a campaign in Egypt and into the Levant.⁵⁵ Some

⁴⁸ *Peutinger Map* 9; *Itinerarium Antonini Placentini* 46; Mior (2014) 193–96.

⁴⁹ Zos. 1.52.4.

⁵⁰ Speidel (2004) 94–95.

⁵¹ Schwartz (2001) 115 discusses Goths/Germanics in armed retinues. I thank Samuele Rocca for his thoughtful discussion.

⁵² Zos. 1.58. For Aphaca, Lightfoot (2003); Aliquot (2009) 258–60; Bonnet (2015) 188–93; Kaizer (2016d) 282–83.

⁵³ *P. Oxy.* 2904. For other papyri, see Kreucher (1998) 268–69; Estiot (2004) 116–17 (with coins).

⁵⁴ *P. Oxy.* 2902. Hartmann (2001) 372–73, n. 53; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 165; Southern (2008) 132. See also previous note.

⁵⁵ *HA* Probus 9.4–5.

have doubted that Aurelian sent a force into Egypt,⁵⁶ as little evidence substantiates it. But once war with Zenobia was imminent, Aurelian would have wanted to secure Egypt, its precious grain, and its revenues on overseas trade.⁵⁷ If Zenobia had been sending grain before, she certainly had ceased now. After his victory over Zenobia, Aurelian reportedly distributed pork, baked bread, oil, and cost-subsidized wine to Rome. So controlling Egypt's grain was presumably a concern.⁵⁸ In any case, Aurelian reclaimed Egypt with ease. Zenobia's governor and magistrates there were complicit. Perhaps they had learned of Aurelian's victory near Immae.⁵⁹ Zenobia and Zabdas had concentrated their military forces in north Syria to confront Aurelian. So a small force, it seems, reclaimed Egypt and attracted defectors. As we have already surmised, it probably linked with Aurelian's main army near Emesa, Heliopolis-Baalbek, or Damascus and helped attract units from Palestine and Phoenicia.

The cities and garrisons of Arabia presumably defected at this juncture too. The Third Legion Cyrenaica joined Aurelian or sat out the fighting. Shortly afterward, the legion rebuilt its temple for Jupiter Hammon at Bostra. It also made an inscription describing how its Palmyrene "enemies" had destroyed it. Moreover, in yet another fabricated letter of the *Historia Augusta*, Aurelian describes how "the Third Legion" had destroyed Palmyra's temple of the Sun.⁶⁰ Many details are inaccurate. Aurelian did not destroy Palmyra.⁶¹ But the legion seemingly joined his forces by the summer of 272. By then, the Tanukh confederation had also become allies of Aurelian.⁶²

Meanwhile, Zenobia and Zabdas had gathered all the remaining soldiers that they could muster at Emesa. Their army was substantial.⁶³ On a nearby plain, the armies waged a fiercely contested battle. Once again, Aurelian's cavalry gave way to a Palmyrene charge. The Palmyrene horsemen, apparently *clibanarii*, inflicted heavy casualties on it. But

⁵⁶ As noted by Hartmann (2001) 372–73, n. 53; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 165; Southern (2008) 132, (2015) 169–70; Barnes (1978) 168. The *Historia Augusta* may have conflated Tenagino Probus, who resisted Zenobia's invasion, with the future emperor Probus.

⁵⁷ See p. 175, nn. 69–70.

⁵⁸ *HA Aur.* 35, 45, 47–48; Potter (2014) 266; Southern (2015) 181–82; Watson (1999) 70–71.

⁵⁹ Hartmann (2001) 372–73; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 165; Southern (2008) 132.

⁶⁰ *IGLS* 13.9107 (with commentary); *HA Aur.* 33; Hartmann (2001) 374, n. 58, and 399; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 97–98, 178–79.

⁶¹ See pp. 208–9, nn. 92–95.

⁶² See pp. 174–75, nn. 56, 63–68, and p. 206, n. 78.

⁶³ *Zos.* 1.52.3 claims that the Palmyrenes numbered 70,000.

as they reached Aurelian's lines, they were unorganized. Aurelian's infantry suddenly attacked (perhaps from behind), repelled them, and advanced. Zosimus informs us that Aurelian's infantrymen from Syria Palestina, wielding bone-smashing clubs and maces, inspired panic. As Zenobia's cavalry fled in chaos, it trampled many of her infantrymen. Their mangled bodies littered the bloody battlefield. Beyond that, details are scarce.⁶⁴ Zenobia fled in haste to Palmyra. Aurelian's army occupied Emesa and captured Zenobia's treasury. The way to Palmyra was now open.

In his usual way, Aurelian reportedly claimed that Elagabal, the sun god of Emesa, had aided him. We have learned in Chapter 8 how Elagabal was worshipped by the provocative "Elagabalus." Aurelian now embraced him. According to his court, Elagabal appeared to his army as the battle raged.⁶⁵ But whatever Aurelian's relationship with Elagabal was, his veneration of his sun god, Sol Invictus, departed from the distinctly Emesene formulation. Aurelian envisioned him as a human figure with a radiate crown, not a meteorite. This was how the Romans worshipped the divine sun.⁶⁶ Aurelian later founded a temple for Sol Invictus (the unconquered Sun) at Rome, during his triumph there in 274. He also minted coins showing Sol Invictus leading or trampling Palmyrene captives (Fig. 7.1).⁶⁷ For the next half-century, Sol Invictus would frequent imperial coinage. Constantine would even vaunt him as his patron divinity, before shifting to more exclusively Christian imagery.⁶⁸

But for now Aurelian was not finished. He had to make a hard march deep into the rugged, dry Syrian steppe. There the Palmyrenes were fortifying their city. Zenobia's last stand awaited him.

The Fight for Palmyra

According to the *Historia Augusta*, Zenobia was destructively defiant as Aurelian petitioned her to surrender her Palmyra. It alleges that she

⁶⁴ Zos. 1.53.1–3, with Paschoud (2003) 171, n. 81; Hartmann (2001) 374–75; Southern (2008) 138–40; Watson (1999) 75–76; Speidel (2004) 94–95; Winsbury (2010) 122–26.

⁶⁵ *HA Aur.* 25.4–5; Potter (2014) 267.

⁶⁶ *HA Aur.* 25.3–5; see Watson (1999) 188–96.

⁶⁷ *HA Aur.* 25.6, 28.5, 35.3; *RIC* 5.1 (various issues).

⁶⁸ Lenski (2016) 27–47; Potter (2013) 128, 176–77.

wrote a mocking letter while advised by Longinus and Nicomachus. As the fabricated letter states:

Zenobia, queen of the East, to Aurelian Augustus: till now no one except you has ever ordered in a letter what you request. Whatever we must do at war, we must do bravely. You order my surrender, as though not knowing that Cleopatra chose to perish while queen rather than live with any other stature. We do not lack Persian aid, which we now anticipate. The Saracens support us; the Armenians support us. Syrian robbers have defeated your army, Aurelian.⁶⁹

Here the *Historia Augusta* portrays Zenobia as leading a motley band of eastern peoples. Treating Zenobia as a “foreigner” (*peregrina*), it recasts a civil war between Romans as a rebellion of nomads and brigands. The *Continuator Dionis* echoes this sentiment. In its narrative, Zenobia’s followers are barbarians, Aurelian’s “Romans.”⁷⁰ But the situation was more complicated than that.

During Aurelian’s campaign, Zenobia’s general Zabbaï was presumably in charge of organizing Palmyra’s defenses. But Zenobia was at a disadvantage. Aurelian now controlled almost all of Syria. Zenobia secured some support from Arabian nomads. But not all of them favored Palmyrene supremacy. We have learned (in Chapter 8) how Zenobia was at odds with the Tanukh confederation. It presumably aided Aurelian.

Another weakness was that Palmyra was not walled. The Palmyrenes had always relied on their remoteness and Euphrates forts. When Marcus Antonius’s army approached in 41 BCE or so, many Palmyrenes apparently transported their moveable property eastward. But this was no more. Now Palmyra was rich with immovable properties and splendid monuments. The Palmyrenes stayed to fight. But they did not have circuit walls. They had built low ramparts just outside the city in the 1st–2nd centuries. These hindered nomadic incursions and channeled routine movements. Only later, during Diocletian’s reign, were circuit walls built. Sources sometimes describe a siege of Palmyra. Aurelian cut

⁶⁹ *HA Aur.* 27.2–5.

⁷⁰ *FHG* 4.197. Sommer (2015b) 118–23; Watson (1999) 66, 86–87.

Palmyra off from roads and camel tracks. But his “siege” did not involve walls or engines.⁷¹

Zenobia still had some cards to play. To reach Palmyra from Emesa, Aurelian’s army had to cross inhospitable terrain. It was now summer. Energized by battlefield victories, his army now faced demoralizing surveillance in a forbidding climate. Zenobia’s nomadic supporters could raid. Moments ago, we witnessed how the *Historia Augusta* has Zenobia boast to Aurelian of her Persian, Armenian, and “Saracen” allies.⁷² It goes too far. It traffics in Roman stereotyping and perhaps the propaganda of Aurelian’s court. Zenobia’s Palmyrenes and Syrians were Romans, if uniquely so. No serious evidence associates her with Persian support.⁷³ If anything, Aurelian’s army was recruiting Persians as mercenaries. Zosimus claims that a Persian archer shot a Palmyrene defender who cursed at the emperor.⁷⁴ But Zenobia surely sought the help of Arabian nomads.⁷⁵ Meanwhile, her soldiers occupied strategic points. In the “Valley of the Tombs,” for example, Palmyrenes built a fortification.⁷⁶ It blocked the road to Emesa. Time, climate, and psychological strain were to take their toll. So Zenobia hoped.

But time proved helpful to Aurelian. His army endured some nomadic attacks. He reportedly even suffered an arrow wound.⁷⁷ But he had nomadic allies too. These supplied food and water. Aurelian also isolated Palmyra’s defenders from its ample hinterland. His army consumed its resources.⁷⁸ Meanwhile, the Palmyrenes became increasingly factional. Some favored resistance. Others promoted negotiation and surrender. Eventually, Zenobia and her generals knew that defeat was imminent. Zenobia tried to flee on a female camel, presumably in the cover of darkness. But Aurelian soon learned of her departure. Perhaps cavalymen who were watching the exit routes noticed. Or maybe Aurelian had recruited reliable informants in the city. The Euphrates was about 200 kilometers away, and night would not always

⁷¹ Crouch (1975a); Juchniewicz, al-As’ad, and al-Hariri (2010); Hartmann (2001) 378–81; Southern (2008) 141–43; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 171–72; Delplace (2017) 186–96. Zos. 1.54–55 describes a siege.

⁷² *HA Aur.* 27.3, 28.4. On “Saracens,” see Retsö (2003) 463–65.

⁷³ Hartmann (2001) 385–86. Winsbury (2010) 126 conceives of Zenobia’s *clibanarii* as Persians.

⁷⁴ Zos. 1.54.2–4; Watson (1999) 77; Southern (2008) 145.

⁷⁵ Graf (1989) 150–55 treats the challenging epigraphic evidence.

⁷⁶ Gawlikowski (1993); Sartre and Sartre (2014) 172. For the road to Emesa, see Bauzou (1989) 207; Mior (2014) 189–92.

⁷⁷ *HA Aur.* 26.1.

⁷⁸ Hartmann (2001) 383; Graf (1989) 150–55. See pp. 174–75, nn. 56, 63–68 on the Tanukh.

hide Zenobia. Horsemen pursued her. As she boarded a boat on the Euphrates, they caught her. Some sources suggest that she was fleeing to Persia for refuge or help.⁷⁹ But her plans are unclear. In the end it did not matter.

Once news of Zenobia's capture spread, Palmyra's holdouts began to surrender. Clemency had been a hallmark of Aurelian's campaign. They hoped to benefit from it. Septimius Haddudan figures prominently here. From a wealthy family, he apparently led the move to surrender. Aurelian rewarded him handsomely. The symposiarch of Bel in 272–273, he became the only Palmyrene outside Odainath's household to hold senatorial rank while residing in the city.⁸⁰ It was August of 272 when Palmyra surrendered.⁸¹

Zenobia and her courtiers were brought to Emesa for judgment. Here Roman beliefs in the “weak-mindedness” of women proved an asset. Aurelian blamed Zenobia's male courtiers for her resistance. Zenobia reportedly indicted some of her men. The sources here cast her as a selfish despot who lost her nerve and saved herself.⁸² This is probably unfair. Aurelian was predisposed to believe that men had manipulated Zenobia. She may have fed his biases. But even if the rumors are true, Zenobia was not just protecting herself. She had her children, especially Wahballath, to consider. Zenobia was also clever. Schooled in the period's cruel politics, she had survived by knowing when not to be an idealist. So she reportedly played the part of a manipulated woman. She and Wahballath lived.

The price for their lives was Longinus. He had reportedly influenced Zenobia's acrimonious correspondence with Aurelian. If composed after Odainath's murder, his speech of praise for him may have been damning too. He suffered death with composure. Aurelian must have believed that Longinus played a key role in mentoring Zenobia. Otherwise it is hard to explain why the emperor, often generous in sparing enemies, had him killed. At this point, we encounter Zabdas and Zabbai no longer. If living, they were probably put to death too.⁸³

⁷⁹ Zos. 1.55–56.1, also *HA Aur.* 28.2–4; Hartmann (2001) 383–86; Southern (2008) 145; Watson (1999) 77–78; Winsbury (2010) 124.

⁸⁰ *PAT* 1358, 2812; Hartmann (2001) 86, 383–86, with 388–90; Southern (2008) 43, 149–50.

⁸¹ Gawlikowski (1971) 417–20.

⁸² Zos. 1.56.3; *HA Aur.* 30.1–3; echoed by John of Antioch in Fr. 180 of Mariev (2008), 235 of Roberto (2005). Southern (2008) 146; Winsbury (2010) 130–31, 152–53 discuss and inform what follows.

⁸³ Zos. 1.56.2–3; *HA Aur.* 30.3; Southern (2008) 146; Watson (1999) 79; and previous note.

Aurelian's return march westward was a victorious one. He had won support at Palmyra and in greater Syria. While not a trustworthy source, Malalas claims that Aurelian had Zenobia publicly displayed on a camel at Antioch.⁸⁴ A milestone from Lebanon even endowed him with the title *imperator orientis* (commander of the East). Odainath and Wahballath had borne similar titles.⁸⁵ But the situation remained volatile. Aurelian had entrusted the East to a certain Marcellinus. Like Odainath, he governed as *rector orientis* or in a similar capacity. As Aurelian crossed Anatolia, various factions continued to compete for authority.⁸⁶ Upon reaching Europe by January of 273, news of an extended revolt arrived. Zosimus informs us that the ringleader was named Apsaios. An inscription describes him as *prostatēs* (protector) of Palmyra.⁸⁷ He apparently had sought to proclaim Marcellinus emperor. But Marcellinus did not defect. Apsaios eventually settled for a certain figure named Antiochus.⁸⁸ He then succeeded in slaughtering six hundred archers that Aurelian had left at Palmyra.⁸⁹

As in so many other 3rd-century episodes, identity issues abound. The revolt's figurehead, Antiochus, has sometimes been identified as Zenobia's father or son.⁹⁰ But Zenobia did not have a son named Antiochus. This Antiochus was not Zenobia's father either. He was probably dead by then. Likewise Aurelian surely removed any living fathers or brothers from the city. At most, Antiochus was a distant relative. Zosimus asserts that Aurelian did not think him worth killing due to his "meanness." Always weak on names, the *Historia Augusta* claims that the usurper was a relative of Zenobia called Achilles. It probably refers to Antiochus or Apsaios.⁹¹

In early 273, Aurelian marched his army back to Palmyra. Zosimus states that he destroyed it.⁹² The *Historia Augusta* even includes a fabricated letter in which Aurelian justifies his soldiers' rampage.⁹³ But the later sources make Aurelian into more bloodthirsty a figure than

⁸⁴ Malalas, 12.30 in Thurn (2000).

⁸⁵ *AE* (1936) 129; Potter (2014) 267.

⁸⁶ Hartmann (2001) 122–23, 395–98; Southern (2008) 150–55 inform present discussion.

⁸⁷ *IGLS* 17.1.77; Zos. 1.60.1. For date, see Potter (2014) 267.

⁸⁸ Zos. 1.60.2.

⁸⁹ *HA Aur.* 31.1–4.

⁹⁰ Hartmann (2001) 122–23, 395–98, who accepts that Antiochus was perhaps Zenobia's father.

⁹¹ Zos. 1.61.1; *HA Aur.* 31.2. Hartmann (2001) 122–23, 395–96, n. 6; Southern (2008) 152; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 177.

⁹² Zos. 1.61.1.

⁹³ *HA Aur.* 31.5–10.

he was.⁹⁴ Palmyra's material remains bear few signs of destruction from Aurelian's occupation.⁹⁵ Presumably, Aurelian's soldiers were given license to plunder. But wholesale demolition did not occur.

At this time, a serious riot or revolt broke out at Alexandria in Egypt. The *Historia Augusta* identifies a merchant named Firmus as the ringleader.⁹⁶ But it seems unreliable here. Its Firmus may be fictional or the conflation of several historical figures. He is not Claudius Firmus. Aurelian had made him *corrector* of Egypt, and he perhaps suppressed the revolt.⁹⁷ Whether it coordinated with the Palmyrene insurgency is unclear. But it too was crushed.⁹⁸ Zenobia remained a hostage of Aurelian's court.

We are confident that Zenobia survived the civil war. Zosimus claims that Zenobia died from disease or self-starvation roughly, apparently while crossing Anatolia in 272. He also states that her followers, save her son, drowned in the Bosphorus.⁹⁹ But this may reflect propaganda circulated by Aurelian's court to discourage further rebellions. Aurelian learned of Palmyra's insurgency only after crossing into Europe, and from there, the Bosphorus was a convenient place for Zenobia to suffer an allegedly fatal misfortune. Most sources state that she was taken to Italy. We should believe this.¹⁰⁰ Aurelian had her displayed in his triumph at Rome of 274. Zenobia was reportedly bound in gold chains so heavy that she could barely walk. But she lived, and her children lived with her.¹⁰¹

Life after Palmyra

While defeated, Zenobia was alive. Living was no mean achievement. The 3rd century is paved with the corpses of children who paid for the ambitions of their fathers and mothers. It is filled with young men and

⁹⁴ See Potter (2014) 265–66 on Aurelian's representations.

⁹⁵ As stressed by Sartre and Sartre (2014) 178–79, (2016) 186–89; al-As'ad, al-As'ad, and Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 303; Schmidt-Colinet (2013) 274; Hartmann (2001) 398–99.

⁹⁶ *HA Aur.* 32.1–3, *QT* 4, with *Amm.* 22.16.15.

⁹⁷ Potter (2014) 268; Hartmann (2001) 403–10; Southern (2015) 155–56; Gagos and Caldwell (2000).

⁹⁸ Hartmann (2001) 403–10.

⁹⁹ *Zos.* 1.59, echoed by Zonaras, 12.27. Hartmann (2001) 414.

¹⁰⁰ *HA TT* 27, 30.27; Eutropius, *Brev.* 9.13.2; Fest., *Brev.* 24; Jerome, *Chron.* for year 274; Syncellus, 721 (Mosshammer 470); Zonaras, 12.27; Jordanes, *Rom.* 291.

¹⁰¹ *HA TT* 30.24–26, *Aur.* 34.3–4. Hartmann (2001) 413–17; Equini Schneider (1993) 53–60; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 15–20, 182–87; Southern (2008) 159–60 treat Zenobia's fate and its sources.

boys who came too close to the deadly glow of power. Their mothers often witnessed the carnage or succumbed to it too. One can go on at length. But let's take Emesene women as an example. Iulia Domna apparently had a child butchered in her arms, by his murderous elder brother. When he met a gruesome end, Iulia Domna departed from this earth too. Iulia Soaemias was slaughtered with her son, the provocative Elagabalus. Iulia Mamaea and Severus Alexander died by the same swords.¹⁰² In 268, Zenobia and Wahballath were in danger of suffering a similar fate. So Zenobia had to play the gory game of 3rd-century imperial politics. She lived, and so did Wahballath.

Aurelian settled Zenobia and her children at Tibur (modern Tivoli,) near Rome.¹⁰³ It was there that she would age. As the years passed, she would also suffer arthritis and tooth decay. She had consumed the excessive fluoride in Palmyra's water for decades.¹⁰⁴ In time, her memories of Palmyra and her trials there faded. But shortly after arriving in Italy, she married a senator. Her children, Wahballath and however many daughters, also found spouses of senatorial rank. Her descendants could still be encountered in Rome thereafter.¹⁰⁵ Judging from the *cognomen* of L. Septimia Patabiniana Balbilla Tyria Nepotilla Odaenathia, Zenobia's descendants may have been there a generation later. Or maybe this figure was related to the Palmyrene community documented at Rome during the 2nd–3rd centuries. A man named Tyrius Septimius Azizus, for example, was a senator at Rome under Gallienus.¹⁰⁶ A certain bishop named Zenobios oversaw the Christian community of Florence later in the 4th century.¹⁰⁷ His relationship to Zenobia cannot be established.

But Zenobia's descendants left their mark at the imperial court that she once fought. Some joined the Roman imperial administration during the 4th century. The Syrian sophist Libanius, of Antioch, is our main source. A descendant named Odainath, after his great-grandfather, served in the emperor Julian's campaigns against the Persians.¹⁰⁸ Libanius petitioned the son of this Odainath to send him the panegyric written

¹⁰² See pp. 167, 169, nn. 15 and 24.

¹⁰³ HA TT 30.27 (*in Tiburti*). For location, see Hartmann (2001) 417–24.

¹⁰⁴ Nakahashi et al. (2016).

¹⁰⁵ For references, p. 122, nn. 70–71 and p. 209, nn. 100–1.

¹⁰⁶ CIL 6.1516=ILS 1202 (Odaenathia); Sartre and Sartre (2014) 87; Baldini (1978) 145–46, (1985) 144–45; Schneider (1993) 59–60; Hartmann (2001) 415; Horster (2001) 319–20.

¹⁰⁷ Paulinus, *Life of Ambrose* 50.24 in Kaniecka (1928); Gibbon (1994) 1.322.

¹⁰⁸ Libanius, *Ep.* 1006, 1078. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 88.

by Longinus for Zenobia's husband. So the household of Zenobia and Odainath lived. It served the Roman Empire that it had always served.

After Aurelian's triumph, Zenobia disappeared into the shadows of time. The shooting star had come to earth. Those who wrote about her thereafter have veiled her in darkness. But maybe we can still catch one last glimmer of her light. Centuries after Zenobia's reign, an Aesopic fable circulating in Syriac lent its wisdom on the human condition. We have already learned how Palmyrenes studied Aesopic fables to learn Greek. So Zenobia perhaps knew of it too. As it states:

Both man and swan demonstrate that all the life of men
is filled with sorrows. For when a man is born, he weeps
miserably, as though ready to suffer evils. But when the swan
departs this life, it sings joyfully, as though truly escaping from
evils. This teaches that all the world is filled with sorrow.¹⁰⁹

Zenobia would have deemed the passage an apt one. When she first wept, she faced the dangers of infancy. A matron, she survived the perils of childbirth. Upon her husband's violent death, she had to grasp imperial power and wage civil war just to protect her children. She lost the overwhelming power and riches that she had once tasted. She spent her final years separated from her ancestral city.

But when the perils were over, Zenobia perhaps found rest. While defeated, she had confronted the hardships of her life with aplomb and resolve. She had governed the Roman East and saved her children at a time of great turbulence. In the imperial politics of the era, survival itself was a rare accomplishment. In her lifetime alone, Gallienus, Odainath, Herodian Hairan, Aurelian, and so many others were carried off by the bloodletting. But Zenobia was resilient and lucky. She lived. We have no inkling of how or when Zenobia died. But when she left this earth, maybe she sang like a swan too.

¹⁰⁹ Lefevre (1941) no. 2.

PART V

Epilogue: Fallen Star

Legacy and Likenesses

We have learned how Zenobia lives through her images. We have also confronted how the “real” Zenobia, in a sense, dies through them. Her Palmyra lives and dies too. It has been re-created and destroyed, restored and manipulated, bought and sold by various modern actors. In May 2015, the Islamic State captured it. Its militants unleashed a spate of horrific atrocities at Tadmur, its adjacent modern city. Among the murdered was the former director of Palmyra’s Antiquities and the Palmyra Museum: Khaled al-As’ad. He was a lifelong scholar of Palmyra. He had a surviving daughter named Zenobia.¹

The months that followed witnessed the end of the temples for Baal-Shamin and Bel. Images of their detonation circulated on social media. The triumphal arch, many tower tombs, and a horde of other remains and artifacts perished too. Human and animal likenesses, including the lion of Allat, were especially targeted. So were Palmyra’s mummies.² Archaeologists throughout the world did what they could to protect, digitize, or document Palmyra’s ruins and their condition, as they had for other Syrian sites during the civil war. Some courageously risked their lives in Syria itself. But for 10 months, Palmyra was at the mercy of the Islamic State. Scholars had to confront a future in which Palmyra’s remains would be dramatically and perhaps irrevocably altered.³

¹ Also emphasized by Judith Weingarten, “Queen Zenobia in History, A.D. 267–2016,” Metropolitan Museum, New York, May 23, 2016, now published in Aruz (2018).

² See **Appendix 1** for reports of the *Syrian Heritage Initiative*. Key discussion is Sartre and Sartre (2016) 206–18. Hutton (2017) does a “salvage” reading of six inscribed portraits destroyed at Manbij.

³ Veyne (2015, 2016); Sartre and Sartre (2016); Kaizer (2016b).

The Assad regime used the episode for political leverage. With Russian support, it recaptured Palmyra in late March 2016 and announced its intention to restore the site. But by so doing, it diverted attention from its own atrocities, the suffering that it, too, inflicted on the people of Tadmur (with Russian airstrikes), and its previous torture of political prisoners there.⁴ It soon built a military base on the protected site.⁵ Its triumph was impermanent. In December 2016, the Islamic State captured Palmyra again and held it for several months. The second occupation happened just as the Assad regime took Aleppo after years of viciously pummeling its population. The human suffering was incalculable. Amid the violence, Zenobia's likeness also became political fodder. The Assad regime had long put images of her on its paper money. When the Islamic State first took Palmyra, it toured a brass statue of Zenobia through Damascus and other cities.⁶

The Assad regime's activity was just a coda to its long tradition of manipulating Zenobia's likeness. We will soon learn how this is so. The Islamic State's destruction of Palmyra's images also has a long history. Westerners have done it too, if for different reasons. To recount the afterlife of Zenobia and her Palmyra would be a vast undertaking. We can only impart a summary. But through it we can learn why historical portraits of Zenobia controlled by our knowledge of Palmyra are perhaps more vital than ever before.

Palmyra without Zenobia

Let's begin with Palmyra after Zenobia's exile. According to a Christian biography, a saint called Alexander the Sleepless visited Palmyra in the 5th century. But he and his disciples got a rude reception:

As the blessed man was crossing all the wilderness with his brothers, who were singing the psalms continually, they arrived at the city of Solomon mentioned in the Book of Kings. Called Palmyra, he founded it in the wilderness. When the

⁴ Sartre and Sartre (2016) 206–18.

⁵ **Appendix 1.**

⁶ <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/sep/29/they-are-barbarians-meet-the-man-maamoun-abdulkarim-defending-syrias-heritage-from-isis>; <http://sana.sy/en/?p=53820>. I owe this observation to Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at p. 215, n. 1). For money, Stoneman (1992) Fig. 25d; Sommer (2015b) 117.

residents saw his crowd of brothers at a distance, and being Jews called Christians, they closed the gates of the city as it approached, while saying to one another, “Who can support all these people? If they come into our city, all of us will want for food!”⁷

The episode is informative. We learn that Palmyra finally had circuit walls and gates. It was populated by Christians. Food production remained a concern. The city still relied on nomads and dimorphic ties for it. The subsequent narrative accredits them with feeding Alexander’s band. Most surprising of all, the Palmyrenes, like Zenobia, were reportedly Jews.

In other words, Palmyra was a living city in late antiquity. But it lived without Zenobia. It had also lost its cosmopolitan stature and caravan trade to India. Palmyrenean inscriptions and funerary portraits no longer appear. Even as Palmyra lived, it changed.⁸ It would have been only partially familiar to Zenobia.

Palmyra first became a military city. Aurelian’s soldiers of course occupied it. Under Diocletian, it was garrisoned.⁹ The temple of Allat and its surroundings were reconfigured as a *castrum*, or military camp.¹⁰ Fortifications and garrisons were established in the hinterland too.¹¹ As Diocletian reorganized the eastern frontier, Palmyra occupied a defensive road called the *Strata Diocletiana*. The “baths of Diocletian” were restored at this time.¹² Palmyra’s circuit walls were largely built then too. They were refurbished under Justinian (527–565 CE) with bastions and towers.¹³ The “Hellenistic city,” now outside the circuit, was apparently abandoned.¹⁴

Gradually, Palmyra also became a Christian city.¹⁵ Diocletian and his tetrarchic successors persecuted and killed many Christians in Zenobia’s former territories, especially Palestine. But after 312 Christianity had Roman imperial support. The Christian presence at Palmyra is attested

⁷ *Alexander the Sleepless*, no. 35, in de Stoop (1911) 685–86, with Caner (2002) 270.

⁸ On “proto-Byzantine” Palmyra, Genequand (2012) 22–37.

⁹ *IGLS* 17.1.121; Delplace (2014) 226, (2017) 197–202; Genequand (2012) 22–25.

¹⁰ Michalowski (1960–1966); the numerous contributions of Gawlikowski in Bieliński (2005), with Gawlikowski (2008); Delplace (2014) 226.

¹¹ Genequand (2012) 72–83.

¹² Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 17; Dodge (1988) 227.

¹³ Procopius, *Buildings*, 2.11.10–12; Malalas, 18.1–2 in Thurn (2000); Delplace (2014) 227.

¹⁴ Gawlikowski (2016c) 486–87.

¹⁵ Kaizer (2010a) is valuable.

for the period. A Palmyrene bishop named Marinus perhaps attended the council of Nicaea in 325.¹⁶ A bishop of Mesene named Boliada was executed by Shapur II in the 340s.¹⁷ Palmyrene Christians, it seems, destroyed the temple of Allat in 385–386.¹⁸

By the 4th–5th centuries, numerous basilicas north of the Great Colonnade began to host Christians. Congregations also gathered at churches near the tetrapylon and transversal colonnade.¹⁹ The temple of Bel became a church too, and Christians drew graffiti on it.²⁰ Scholars debate whether the temple of Baal-Shamin had the same stature.²¹ Palmyrene Christians made funerary inscriptions in Greek too. These commemorate the 5th–6th century dead.²² A monastery near Palmyra produced a Syriac codex that still survives.²³ Eventually, rumors circulated that Palmyra was where David killed Goliath. Solomon had allegedly founded the city to commemorate it.²⁴

Christian life at Palmyra survived the Arab conquests. But the city was violently suppressed, and its circuit walls reportedly destroyed, after revolting against Umayyad rule in 745.²⁵ A Christian bishop was nonetheless active in 818. The churches at the temple of Bel and elsewhere persisted into the 9th century too. Thereafter, Christian traces vanish. But Palmyra continued to transform under Arab Muslim influences. In the 8th century, a *suq* was built in the Great Colonnade; a mosque was established in the “Caesareum.”²⁶ The city remained inhabited and fortified. In the 12th century, a bastion was built at the gates of the precinct of Bel. The temple perhaps became a mosque.²⁷ Benjamin of

¹⁶ *Patrum Nicaenorum nomina* in Gelzer, Hildgenfeld, and Cuntz (1995) 14, 83, 101, 123, 191(?). Marinus is absent from the Greek lists, however.

¹⁷ BM 12150 in Nau (1912) 24; *Narration for the Blessed Simeon bar Sabba'e* in Kmosko (1907) 779–81, 831–32. Tubach (1993).

¹⁸ Gawlikowski (1983) 195; (2008) 401; Stoneman (1992) 190.

¹⁹ Majcherek (2005, 2013); Kaizer (2010a) 115; Delplace (2014) 227–31, (2017) 203–14; Genequand (2012) 25–29; Sommer (2017) 226.

²⁰ *IGLS* 17.1.47–48.

²¹ Majcherek (2013) 252–53, with n. 6.

²² *IGLS* 17.1.494–500; Delplace (2017) 214–15.

²³ Millar (2013) 22–27, now in (2015) 769–73.

²⁴ Malalas, 5.15, 5.39, 18.1–2 in Thurn (2000).

²⁵ Genequand (2012) 45–46, with references.

²⁶ Majcherek (2005) 144–45; Genequand (2012) 45–69, (2013); Delplace (2017) 216–18: Islamic Palmyra. Also Hammad (2010) 45–65; Sommer (2017) 232–34.

²⁷ Seyrig, Amy, and Will (1968–1975) 1.159–60; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 261; Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 69–71. *Inv.* 9.54 for key Arabic inscription, with 9.39–64 generally. On the hinterland, Genequand (2012) 85–90. Dimashqi mentions a mosque at Palmyra about this time. Mehren (1874) 40. Yakut seems to refer to the bastion. Le Strange (1890) 541.

Tudela places 2000 Jews there at about this time.²⁸ A 14th-century author described Palmyra as having rich gardens.²⁹ As the next century dawned, a Druze emir built the fortress on its northwestern heights.³⁰ It still dominates the surrounding landscape, despite the damage it has recently suffered.

At this point, Palmyra was largely lost to Europeans. But Western travelers began to frequent it in the 17th century.³¹ William Halifax visited it with merchants in 1691. Amid increased interest, Robert Wood and James Dawkins published their work on Palmyra's monuments in 1753.³² Waves of travelers and scholars arrived through the next century. L.-F. Cassas did drawings of its remains in the 1780s; Haynes produced his photographs a century later.³³ A Russian-Georgian prince discovered the Palmyrene Tax Law in 1881. Russians took it to St. Petersburg in 1901.³⁴ Danish scholars brought numerous sculptures, as well as a mummy, to Copenhagen.³⁵ In the opening decades of the 20th century, Thomas Wiegand conducted the expedition that recorded most key monuments.³⁶ His contemporary, J.-B. Chabot, edited many discovered inscriptions.³⁷ In the 1920s, Harald Ingholt began his pioneering studies and cataloguing of Palmyrene sculpture.³⁸ It has now come to full fruition in the *Palmyra Portrait Project*.

But as knowledge accumulated, there was also loss. Western travelers scoured Palmyra for antiquities.³⁹ Its remains circulated promiscuously. Funerary portraits, sarcophagi, and Palmyrene corpses disappeared from their tombs, their find spots unrecorded. Many of the portraits are now in museums and collections of Europe and America. Sometimes travelers left Palmyra with decapitated portrait heads. So these were

²⁸ Adler (1907) 31, *fm*.

²⁹ Tlass (2000) 185; Richards (2017) 72.

³⁰ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 261; Sommer (2017) 234.

³¹ Degeorge (2001) 262–83, Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 22–27; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 11–19; Sommer (2017) 8–11 provide overviews of the European visits, explorations, and excavations of the 17th–20th centuries. Also see several articles of *SP* 12. Astengo (2016) provides recent treatment of 17th-century British visitors, with Greenhalgh (2016) 275–82, focusing on visitors in the 17th–19th centuries.

³² Wood (1753).

³³ Ketelson (2016); Anderson and Ousterhout (2016).

³⁴ Gawlikowski (2013), Shifman (2014).

³⁵ Ploug (1995); Stauffer (2012) 89; Colledge (1976) no. 59 (photo of mummy).

³⁶ Wiegand (1932).

³⁷ These are the basis of *CIS* 2.3.

³⁸ Raja and Sørensen (2015a, 2015b).

³⁹ For this phenomenon in Syria, Greenhalgh (2016), including 275–82 (Palmyra).

forever severed from their artistic context.⁴⁰ Visitors collected the remains of Palmyra's dead.⁴¹ Intact mummies are much harder to find now. As the 20th century dawned, Palmyra was littered with bronze coins. Only an infinitesimal fraction has been documented.⁴²

After World War I, the French occupied Syria. The French Mandate's espoused goal was to organize Syria's population into a modern state until self-governance was possible. It conceived of Syria as a "primitive" society prone to chaotic violence. It also deemed Syria's population "accustomed to idleness." Its traditional social structures allegedly extended "back to the dawn of time."⁴³ So the Mandate's agents built new towns, roads, and schools. They also killed civilians in response to Syrian resistance. During the Great Syrian revolt of 1925–1927, French shells and bombs rained on Damascus. Public executions were staged. Photos of Syrian corpses circulated in a display of the French state's power. Local atrocities became routine.⁴⁴

It was in this dark chapter that systematic excavation and recording at Zenobia's Palmyra began. When the French arrived, a village of Bedouin lived in the precinct for Bel. But they sought to make the village "modern" while creating knowledge of Syria's past. So in 1929, it was relocated to the newly established city of Tadmur.⁴⁵ Palmyra became an archaeological site in earnest. The French army celebrated its achievement:

The application of modern methods will give rise to a victory over ancestral customs. . . . Orientals, who more than any other people respect and fear authority, are susceptible to military influence in spite of themselves.⁴⁶

As for the site of Palmyra, nearly a century of excavation, documentation, preservation, and restoration commenced.⁴⁷ Scholars throughout the world have contributed to it. We all rely on such work for our knowledge of Zenobia's Palmyra today. But the archaeological site and

⁴⁰ I owe this observation to Rubina Raja, "Palmyrene Funerary Portraiture: Individualization and Group Identity," Metropolitan Museum, NY, May 23, 2016, now published in Aruz (2018); Gawlikowski (2016a) 126.

⁴¹ For example, Wright (1895) 82, 194.

⁴² Wright (1895) 155–56. Kaizer (2007) 45.

⁴³ Neep (2012), with 74 for quotations from French Mandate documents.

⁴⁴ Neep (2012), esp. 37–38, 50–57, with McHugo (2015) 85–88.

⁴⁵ DeGeorge (2001) 282–83; Starcky and Gawlikowski (1985) 25; Neep (2012) 142–43.

⁴⁶ Lt. Frisch (1936) 9, translated by Neep (2012) 142–43.

⁴⁷ See pp. 9–10, nn. 31–33.

modern city, both artifacts of Western imperialism, would continue to become enmeshed in a web of atrocities and violent, repressive nationalist movements. As the United States became a global hegemon, it intervened in Middle Eastern affairs for its own advantage. So its relationship with Syria's governments became ever so strained.⁴⁸ As this unfolded, Zenobia's "Arab" war against "the West" took on importance for the Assad regime, which invested in Palmyra's excavation and restoration. Palmyra's value to Western audiences also assumed great significance for the Islamic State, which invested in its destruction

But even as Palmyra was "lost" and "rediscovered" by Western travelers and scholars, Zenobia was not. In Europe and the Middle East, writers separated by distance, time, and, cultures wrote about her. Their likenesses of Zenobia merit exploration. Let's contemplate the "Arab" and "Oriental" Zenobia that has longed survived the Roman empress who fought Aurelian. Let's ponder the likenesses that have outlived the monuments and portraits that the Islamic State has destroyed.

An "Oriental" Zenobia

Zenobia figures prominently in Edward Gibbon's *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. Parroting the *Historia Augusta's* life of Zenobia, Gibbon contrasted the Palmyrene dynast with the decadent East that looms so large in his narrative:

Zenobia is perhaps the only female, whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her by the climate and manners of Asia.⁴⁹

But Gibbon was also influenced by the *Historia Augusta's* life of Aurelian and Zosimus. So he attributed Zenobia's denouncing of Longinus to a feminine frailty:

But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ As described by McHugo (2015) 111–78.

⁴⁹ Gibbon (1994) 1.313; Watson (1999) 85. Similarly, Sommer (2015b) 116–18 on Albinoni's opera for Zenobia (performed in 1693).

⁵⁰ Gibbon (1994) 1.319; Watson (1999) 86.

Gibbon's assessment at once embodies many of the paradoxes of Zenobia's Roman sources. Depicting her as a manly woman, it endows her with "womanly" weaknesses. Even while casting her in a positive light, it does not conceive of her as a Roman. Zenobia is an eastern queen who governs inert peoples.

Zenobia's "afterlife" has been robust. European and American writers have repeatedly celebrated her in literature, history, and music. She has appeared in paintings, sculptures, tapestries, and movies.⁵¹ Her likenesses have been diverse. Medieval and modern treatments often cast Zenobia as a virtuous or courageous woman, without emphasizing her Near Eastern origins. But Zenobia's varied portrayals also have a common thread. They mirror the *Historia Augusta's* largely contrived likeness.⁵² One can also comment on works without historical pretensions. For Boccaccio, she embodied womanly virtue. Petrarch, Chaucer, and Christine de Pizan also paid tribute to her.⁵³ Various composers, painters, and sculptors crafted their own likenesses of her. Not least among them were Rossini and Albinoni.⁵⁴ In the 19th century, she inspired a novel by William Ware and a history by William Wright.⁵⁵

The Western likenesses of Zenobia cast shadows. We have already learned how they are based on the *Historia Augusta's* dubious testimony. So they replicate its biases (favorable or not). But before Europeans began to frequent Palmyra in the 18th century, these likenesses were rarely those of an explicitly eastern Zenobia. Afterward, more writers began framing Zenobia in romantic terms as an "Oriental."⁵⁶ We have seen how Gibbon's narrative does this. Writing in 1895, the aforementioned William Wright (not the contemporary Syriac/Arabic scholar of the same name) thought similarly. He did not understand that Zenobia's soldiers were overwhelmingly recruited from Roman Syria.

⁵¹ Full discussion is Sartre and Sartre (2014) 191–262; Sartre (2016). What follows largely summarizes their detailed treatment. Also Southern (2008) 14–16; Sommer (2015b), (2017) 238–41; Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁵² Sartre and Sartre (2014) 229–31; Southern (2008) 15; Sommer (2015b) 118–24.

⁵³ Boccaccio, *de claris mulieribus*, Rubric 100; Chaucer, *Monks Tale*, lines 3442–44, 3467–76, 3493–500. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 199–201; Sartre (2016) 208; Stoneman (1992) 111–13; Sommer (2017) 238; Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁵⁴ Sartre (2016) 213–14, 216–17; Sommer (2015b) 116–18; Stoneman (1992) 1 on the Welsh poet Nicholas Mitchell.

⁵⁵ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 233–34; Wright (1895).

⁵⁶ Sartre (2016) 218–20; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 235–45; Watson (1999) 66, 85–87 discuss the "Oriental" Zenobia.

So he attributes Palmyra's victories to their command of "Roman" (Italian) troops. He surmises that once these troops were dead or had defected, Zenobia's defeat was inevitable, for only "Orientals" were left in her army. As Wright claims, "the steady Roman legions carried her to victory. But the power of Rome had revived, and the Oriental was a feeble reed in the face of the imperial storm."⁵⁷ Such works obviously replicate the *Historia Augusta's* treatment of Zenobia as a "foreigner" (*peregrina*). But Western beliefs in the inertia of an "Orient" prone (paradoxically) to unstable outbreaks of sectarian violence, or in other words "Orientalism,"⁵⁸ have had a role in this too. We have already seen how they informed the colonial violence of the French Mandate and its re-creation of Palmyra. Wright's belief in the indolence of Middle Eastern peoples, past and present, likewise permeates his narrative. So it renders Zenobia as an outsider to Rome's "western" empire. This theme persisted into the 20th and 21st centuries, but with a twist. Among the voices of decolonization, Zenobia's putative eastern or anti-Roman qualities were romanticized, not disparaged. So for European and Middle Eastern authors, Zenobia became a figure of Arab resistance against Western rule.⁵⁹

In so many ways, the Western images of Zenobia often obscure the actual 3rd-century figure. They rely on the tenuous portrait from the *Historia Augusta*. At times these images have been symptomatic of an Orientalist perspective tied to colonialism in the Middle East. They have cast Zenobia as an exceptional figure in an "Orient" otherwise deemed incapable of self-governance. Through them the "real" Zenobia dies even as she lives. But such is the case for Arab narratives too.

An Arab Zenobia

Long after Aurelian's conquest, Zenobia had a remarkable afterlife in the Islamic world. According to al-Tabari, a Persian historian (8th–9th centuries) who wrote in Arabic, a woman named al-Zabba ruled

⁵⁷ Wright (1895) 154.

⁵⁸ The literature on Orientalism since Said (1978) is massive and beyond this study's scope.

⁵⁹ Sartre and Sartre (2014) 235–38; Sartre (2016) 219–20.

Tadmur and murdered her rival, king Jadhimah, by feigning an offer of marriage. The killing happened as follows:

Jadhimah was surrounded by horsemen and brought before al-Zabbā'. When she saw him, she uncovered and, lo and behold, the hair of her pudendum was plaited. She said, "Oh Jadhimah, do you see the concern of a bride?" This became a proverb. He said, "The limit has been reached, the moist ground has been dried up, and I see a case of treachery." She replied, "By my deity, we do not suffer from a lack of razors, or scarcity of surgeons, but it is a custom of men."⁶⁰

Al-Masudi recounts two versions of this same basic tradition. In one of them, al-Zabba asks Jadhimah whether he "sees the vulva of a bride" before his execution.⁶¹

It is widely accepted that al-Zabba is based on Zenobia. But the tradition just described is a cryptic one. Why al-Zabba exposed herself and commented on her pubic hair is unclear. Jadhimah's statement does not make much sense either. But al-Tabari's audience understood what all this meant. We will see how in a moment.

However cryptic it may seem, al-Tabari's passage provides glimpses of the new likenesses that Arabic authors created for Zenobia. We have already learned how she had close ties to Arabian peoples, cultures, and traditions. We have also explored how she was not an Arab by self-definition. But in the centuries after her life, Arabic authors crafted images of an Arab Zenobia. These authors borrowed motifs that circulated among Greeks, Romans, Jews, Arabs, and Persians. They included al-Dabbi, al-Dinawari, al-Masudi, and most famously al-Tabari.⁶² Their likenesses had a historical substrate. Zenobia did apparently fight the contemporary Tanukh confederation. But their al-Zabba is mostly legendary.

The legends do not mention Zenobia's relationship with Rome. They say nothing about Odainath and Wahballath. They instead portray

⁶⁰ Translation by Perlmann (1987) 142, though Weststeijn (2016) 98 has "handiwork of a bride." For translations of al-Masudi's account, Monferrer-Sala (2012) 92; De Maynard, de Courteille, and Pellat (1965) 399 (1049–1050).

⁶¹ Based on Weststeijn (2016) 98, with al-Masudi's account translated by Monferrer-Sala (2012) 92; De Maynard, de Courteille, and Pellat (1965) 399 (1049–1050).

⁶² Hartmann (2001) 332–33; Stoneman (1992) 156; Equini Schneider (1993) 45–46; Weststeijn (2013), (2016).

Arab peoples who inhabit a social universe of tribal alliances, violence, and revenge.⁶³ In the legends, al-Zabba's father is the ruler of the Arabs of Mesopotamia and adjoining territories in Syria. His name is 'Amr ibn Zarib. But his rival is Jadhimah, an Arab ruler in Iraq. When the two meet in battle, 'Amr ibn Zarib is killed.

But al-Zabba seeks revenge. Feigning submission, she invites Jadhimah to marry her. Despite the warnings of Qasir, an advisor, Jadhimah accepts. When Jadhimah arrives, al-Zabba exposes her braided pubic hair. In the time of al-Tabari, women who anticipated intercourse often had their private parts shaved. But al-Zabba is apparently chaste. Her pudenda are long enough for braiding and explain the name that she bears (al-Zabba means "the hairy one").⁶⁴ She is also exposing her ploy. Jadhimah now knows that a fertile promise ("moist ground") has "dried up." He is about to die. Plying him with drink, al-Zabba has Jadhimah's veins cut.

Meanwhile, Qasir flees to 'Amr ibn 'Adi, Jadhimah's nephew. They begin to plot al-Zabba's death. But al-Zabba is informed by her soothsayers that 'Amr ibn 'Adi will be her killer. So she sends a spy to paint a likeness of him. Meanwhile, at Qasir's request, 'Amr ibn 'Adi has him beaten and his nose cut off. Now disfigured, Qasir flees to al-Zabba's court and gains her confidence. Moving back and forth between Tadmur and Iraq, he has 'Amr ibn 'Adi's soldiers placed in sacks and loaded onto camels. In this way, they enter and overwhelm Tadmur. 'Amr ibn 'Adi corners and kills al-Zabba as she flees through an underground tunnel. After his death, his son Imru al-Qays succeeds him.⁶⁵

Such images of an Arab Zenobia are mostly legendary, and anachronistic. But the premise of an Arab Zenobia is potent. In the face of Western imperialism, it has played a pivotal role in modern Arab writings, even if these often rely more on the *Historia Augusta* than the Arab legends.⁶⁶ In the 1870s, Salim al-Bustani, from Lebanon, wrote a novel that depicted Zenobia as a woman of extraordinary beauty, courage, and intelligence. It weaves a fictitious tale in which Zenobia's

⁶³ The following paragraphs summarize al-Tabari in Perlmann (1987) 138–50. For al-Tabari and other Arabic sources on al-Zabba, see de Perceval (1847–1848), 2.28–39; Hartmann (2001) 332–51; Equini Schneider (1993) 45–52; Hvidberg-Hansen (2002) 138–44; Hoyland (2009) 389–90; Woltering (2014) 28–29; Sommer (2015b) 113–15. For al-Masudi's version, see Monferrer-Sala (2012) 92.

⁶⁴ For Zenobia's pubic hair, see Woltering (2014) 28; Sommer (2015b) 114–15; Stoneman (1992) 157.

⁶⁵ As described by al-Tabari in Bosworth (1999) 44, 67.

⁶⁶ Key treatment is Sartre and Sartre (2014) 252–58; Woltering (2014); Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

daughter Julia falls in love with a Roman officer named Piso. Advocating for marriages based on love, it also ostensibly celebrates the convergence of East and West.⁶⁷ Al-Bustani was writing while Syria was under Ottoman control but increasingly visited by Europeans such as William Wright. He apparently believed that a Western strain of modernity was desirable for Middle Eastern peoples. But this was before French occupation and then American and Soviet foreign policy had left their marks on Syria. Once these had, the images of Zenobia crafted by Arabs would embody resistance, not reconciliation.

By the 1970s, Arab writings like the anonymous *Zanubya* were taking this tack. Celebrating Zenobia's fight against Roman (Western) aggression, it offers a more Marxian and anticolonial perspective. It also advocates for the autonomy of women, whom Roman rule, too, oppresses.⁶⁸ *Zanubya* even depicts its heroine as betrayed by "capitalist" traders and tribal leaders. Refusing to supply her with horses, they become complicit in Aurelian's victory.⁶⁹ To the present day, artists of the Middle East have cast Zenobia as an emancipatory figure for Arabs and women. In the Lebanese musical *Zenobia* (2007–2008), Zenobia calls herself a "cry for freedom."⁷⁰ An Arab Zenobia has appeared in many other histories, fictions, operas, and poems since the early 20th century.⁷¹

But as liberating and potent as Zenobia's Arab likenesses have been, they have also been manipulated to oppressive ends. For the Assad regime, Palmyra has represented a bastion of pan-Arab nationalism that resisted the forces of Western imperialism.⁷² It has been so even as the regime has pursued what can be construed as non-Baathist, self-interested aims. So in the 1980s, Mustafa Tlass wrote a book in which he portrayed Zenobia as an Arab heroine. A military man, Tlass was one of Hafez al-Assad's closest aides in his rise to autocratic power, coercive rule, and violent suppression of dissent. He became his Defense Minister in 1972 and continued to be a prominent official when Bashar al-Assad succeeded his father in 2000.⁷³ His Baathist ideological

⁶⁷ Woltering (2014) 31–32, 37; Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁶⁸ Woltering (2014) 32–33, 37–38; Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁶⁹ Woltering (2014) 33. Also Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁷⁰ Woltering (2014) 36; Sartre and Sartre (2014) 255; Judith Weingarten, "Queen Zenobia" (see at n. 1).

⁷¹ Zahran (2010) weaves history and historical fiction of an Arab Zenobia. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 255–58 critique.

⁷² Sartre and Sartre (2016) 21–32, 219–38 discusses the Baathist interpretations of Palmyra and Syria's other antiquities.

⁷³ McHugo (2015) 153, 189, 206, 217.

alignment informs his image of Zenobia. In his view, Zenobia staged a separatist rebellion against Western imperialism on behalf of Arab civilization. Zenobia's work anticipated modern pan-Arab nationalism and, before it, the Islamic Caliphate. According to Tlass:

The Queen of the Desert created for her, and for her son,
an Arab Empire free from any Roman domination. . . . it
anticipated the Arab-Islamic State four centuries later.”⁷⁴

Tlass's narrative also makes a direct comparison between the Roman Empire and the United States and other modern European powers.⁷⁵ Being emblematic of the destructive potency that Western polities have wielded in the Middle East, both the Roman Empire and the modern West stand in stark contrast to the “originality of the Arab world” and its “civilized function” that Palmyra's monuments embodied.⁷⁶ Tlass even maps Palmyra onto the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “Is there any difference between the civilized challenge which Palmyra faced and the civilized challenge which the Arab Nation faces in its struggle with the Zionist state?”⁷⁷ So Tlass's likeness of Zenobia is of one who “took the charge of leading the liberation movement on behalf of all the East or, more specifically, all the Arabs.”⁷⁸

One can find other examples of this viewpoint. Zenobia's likeness, modeled on that of Roman coins, has appeared on Syrian currency.⁷⁹ On Syrian television, in 1997, a dramatic series portrayed Zenobia's struggle against the Romans.⁸⁰ By drawing such links to an Arab Zenobia and her Palmyra, the Assad regime has endowed its pan-Arab and anti-Western vision with a history that extends to ancient times. But it has also justified its oppressive rule and its atrocities against its own population. So it organized parades for a brass image of Zenobia after ceding her Palmyra to the Islamic State in 2015.⁸¹ In this way, it could still lay claim

⁷⁴ Tlass (2000) 168–69, originally published in Arabic (1985), French (1986). Similarly, Zahran (2010) esp. 85–90. Sartre and Sartre (2014) 253–55, (2016) 21–32, 219–21 discuss this issue.

⁷⁵ Tlass (2000) 224.

⁷⁶ Tlass (2000) 212–13.

⁷⁷ Tlass (2000) 230.

⁷⁸ Tlass (2000) 194. See Sartre and Sartre (2014) 245.

⁷⁹ Stoneman (1992) Fig. 25d; Sommer (2015b) 117.

⁸⁰ Southern (2008) 1. At present, *al-Ababid* or *al-Ababeed (Anarchy)* can be found on Youtube.

⁸¹ See p. 216, n. 6.

to Zenobia even while warring against the same Syrian Arabs whom she once reputedly defended.

Palmyra has also become a potent symbol for the Islamic State and its warring, if to different ends. In its vast swathe of destruction in Syria and Iraq, its militant, iconoclastic religious views have motivated its minions to destroy parts of the Palmyra in which Zenobia once lived. They have inspired its bloodletting among the inhabitants of Tadmur. But the Islamic State and its perspective on Palmyra did not take shape in isolation. As we have learned, the archaeological site of Palmyra is an artifact of Western imperialism. It has vast pan-Arab value for the Assad regime. It also appeals to a Western and increasingly global market that treasures its antiquities, though many Syrians value these as their patrimony too.⁸² What ancient and modern Palmyra represents is antagonistic to the worldview of the Islamic State. So it has destroyed Palmyra's key monuments, artifacts, and portraits, while looting and selling its antiquities as well. As it tries to relive the earliest caliphate, it has sought to erase the traces that Zenobia's Palmyra has left. Its Zenobia has no image, no likeness.

The history of Western imperialism in the Middle East has shaped the image of Zenobia as a rebel against Roman occupation. The formation of modern Arab nationalisms and anti-imperial movements have had a huge impact too. Zenobia's stature as an Arab heroine has become a focal point for ideals of liberation and autonomy. So it has much intrinsic value. But it has also been manipulated in ways that have helped authorize violence, oppression, and a horrific humanitarian crisis. This image is also far removed from the Zenobia who once confronted Aurelian's army. Zenobia and the Palmyrenes were not aware of having any place in a pan-Arab movement. They also were Romans, if uniquely so. But the modern Arab narratives represent how people throughout history have created new images for Zenobia. Through them Zenobia continues to live and die.

Likenesses and Iconoclasm

As an archaeological site, Zenobia's Palmyra is the product of Western expectations and imperial management. For decades, the Assad regime

⁸² Harmanşah (2015); De Cesari (2015); Sartre and Sartre (2016) 238–46.

has endowed its ruins with pan-Arab significance. Recently, the Islamic State has been destroying these same ruins. All such phenomena have brought immeasurable suffering to those who have lived in the Syria that Zenobia long ago ruled. Zenobia has not risen above the fray unscathed. She has been an “Oriental” marvel for certain Western writers. The Assad regime has leveraged her as an Arab heroine. In recent times, the Islamic State may have destroyed or looted whatever few traces of her were left at Palmyra. Even if these were to be found, so many of Zenobia’s features and aspirations would still be unknown. In all these ways, Zenobia has died. When we think of her and her city, we cannot but think of death.

But we also think of life. Zenobia still lives through her images. If some cast shadows, others shed light. Historians still try to glimpse the “real” Zenobia through the likenesses that they create. Their efforts are vital. They situate Zenobia in her Roman Palmyrene context. They generate images of her based on ancient evidence and categories of experience. These images can invalidate the likenesses crafted by Western Orientalism and Assad regime propaganda. They confront the iconoclasm of the Islamic State.

Such has been the intent of this book. We may never fully grasp who Zenobia was. So faint are the traces that our shooting star has left. But from time to time she returns to the sky. We fix our eyes on her light, and we fashion our likeness. Most people of antiquity have vanished. Most are forgotten. But as always, Zenobia is resilient and lucky. Her Palmyra may die. She lives.

APPENDIX 1

Palmyrene Monuments Mentioned

The damage that the material remains of Palmyra have suffered, and the current state of its antiquities, cannot be treated in his book. The *Syrian Heritage Initiative* provides reports that document the destruction of antiquities in Syria:

<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/weekly-reports/>
<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/special-reports/>

For reports of the *Syrian Heritage Initiative* on the destruction of antiquities at Palmyra, including those mentioned in this book:

Pertinent to the Islamic State's first occupation:

http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Palmyra_UpdateReport_FINAL4reduced.pdf
http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/NEW2_PalmyraSpecialReport3-FINAL.pdf
<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/ASOR-CHI-Palmyra-Military-Base-Report-r.pdf>
http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ASOR_CHI_Weekly_Report_85%E2%80%939386r.pdf
http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/ASOR_CHI_Weekly_Report_87%E2%80%939388r.pdf
http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/ASOR_CHI_Weekly_Report_99%E2%80%9393100r.pdf

Pertinent to the Islamic State's second occupation:

<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/new-damage-in-palmyra-uncovered-by-asor-chi/>

<http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/update-palmyra-new-photographs-detail-damage-to-the-unesco-world-heritage-site-of-palmyra/>

http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ASOR_CHI_March17_Monthly_Report.pdf

http://www.asor-syrianheritage.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/ASOR_CHI_March17_Appendices.pdf

APPENDIX 2

Brief and Simple Guide to Palmyrenean Aramaic

Palmyrenean (or Palmyrene) was a dialect of Aramaic spoken and written at Palmyra and overwhelmingly attested in the first three centuries CE.¹ Like certain other Aramaic dialects of the period (Nabataean and Hatrean, for example), it is known only by inscriptions, not literary texts. As with most Semitic languages, only its consonants were usually written. But in contrast to classical Syriac, a vital language of Christianity originating as an Aramaic dialect of Edessa, or forms of Aramaic written by Jews, Palmyrenean never had a scribal tradition that preserved its vowel sounds. So we can only theorize the pronunciations of words and personal names, often by drawing comparisons with other Aramaic dialects, Hebrew, or Arabic. In this book, I tend to render personal names in one of the conventional forms used by modern scholarship and minimize the use of diacritical marks. The chart below should help readers navigate Palmyrenean names and terms in a basic way.²

¹ See p. 9, n. 28, and the next footnote, which govern the following discussion.

² Information on letters, transliterations, and pronunciations compiled by consulting Cantineau (1935); Rosenthal (2006); and Coakley (2013). I do not list spirant sounds, and I generally use the Syriac forms for the names of letters, as in Coakley (2013). For Aramaic and its dialects, see Gzella (2015).

<u>Letter</u>	<u>Palmyrenean</u>	<u>Transliteration</u>	<u>Basic</u>
	<u>Script³</u>		<u>Pronunciation</u>
alaph	Ⲁ	ʾ	glottal stop (or as vowel, a or e)
beth	ⲁ	b	b
gamal	Ⲃ	g	g
dalath	ⲃ	d	d
he	Ⲅ	h	h
waw	ⲅ	w	w (or as vowel, o or u)
zayn	Ⲇ	z	z
heth	ⲇ	ḥ	h (harsher than <i>he</i>)
teth	Ⲉ	ṭ	emphatic t (stronger than <i>taw</i>)
yod	ⲉ	y	y (or as vowel, i or e)
kaph	Ⲋ	k	k
lamad	ⲋ	l	l
mem	Ⲍ	m	m
nun	ⲍ	n	n
semkath	Ⲏ	s	s
ʿe	ⲏ	ʿ	stop deep in the throat (harder than <i>alaph</i>)
pe	Ⲑ	p	p
sade	ⲑ	ṣ	ts, emphatic s
qoph	Ⲓ	q	emphatic k
resh	ⲓ	r	r
shin	Ⲕ	š	sh
taw	ⲕ	t	t

³ Letters redrawn from Cantineau (1935) 19.

APPENDIX 3

Inscriptions for Odainath's Household

1. *Odainath's Career, Early 250s (Odainath and Herodian Hairan)*

Odainath

1a. *IGLS* 17.1.545: original provenance unknown, found in Ayyubid bastion, late 240s or early 250s. Translated on p. 153

Τὸ μνημῖον τοῦ ταφεῶνος ἔκτισεν ἐξ ιδίων Σεπτίμιος Ὀδαιναθος ὁ
λαμπρότατος συνκλητ[ικὸς] Αἰρανου Ουαβαλλαθου τοῦ
Νασωρου αὐτῷ τε
καὶ υἱοῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ υἱωνοῖς εἰς τὸ παντελὲς αἰῶνιον τειμήν

qbr' dnh bn' 'dynt sqltyq' br h̄yrn whblt n̄swr lh wlnwh wlnb'
bnwhy l'im'

1b. *IGLS* 17.1.54: April 252, on column, western segment of the Great Colonnade. Translated on p. 112

Σεπτίμιον Ὀδαινα-	
[θον Αἰ]ρανου Ο[υαβ]αλλα-	
θου [τοῦ Νασωρου] λαμπρό-	šlm' sp̄tmyws ' [dynt br h̄yrn]
τατον [ἔξαρ]χον Παλμυ-	br whblt n̄swr r̄š['] dy [tdmw]r
ρηνῶν Ἰούλιος Αὐρήλιος	nhyr' d'bd lh 't'qb br 'gylw br
Αθηακα[βος Ο]γῆλου Ζαβδι-	zbdbwl br mqymw dmqr' qr'

Βω[λου Μο]κίμου τοῦ καὶ Κω- rḥmh lyqrhwn brbnwth byrh
 ρα τὸν φίλον στοργῆς ἔνε- nysn šnt 563
 [κε]ν, ἔτους γξφ' μηνεὶ
 [Ξανδ]ικῶ

1c. *PAT* 2753=Cantineau (1931) 138, no. 17. Gawlikowski (1985) 253 for reconstructed reading. Palmyra, precinct for Bel.

[...]l[y]qr 'dynt br ḥyrn whblt [...]
 [...]rš]' dy tdmwr 'bd 'gylw b[r...]]
 [...]ny ḥdwdn ḥd' mw[...]dnh[...]
 [...]wn' wmq[...]

Translation: in honor of Odainath, son of Hairan, (son of) Wahballath... [leader] of Tadmor, made by Ogeilu, [son]... [fragmentary, some personal names]

Herodian Hairan

1d. *IGLS* 17.1.58: October 251, on column, central segment of the Great Colonnade

Σεπτίμιον <u>Αἰρα</u> νην Ὁ-	
δαιναθοῦ τὸν λαμπρό-	
τατον συνκλητικὸν	šlm' dnh dy spṭmyws ḥyrn br
ἔξα[ρχον τῶν? Παλμυ]ρηνῶν	'dynt snqltyq' nhyr' wrš
Αὐρήλι[ος Φλαβιανὸς] Αὐρ(ηλίου)	tdmwr dy 'qym lh 'wrls
Ἡλιοδώρο[υ τοῦ Ρααίου] στρατιώ-	plynws br mry' plyn' r'y plḥ'
της λεγ(εῶνος) [γ' Κυρηνα]ϊκῆς τὸν	dblgyn' dy bšr' lyqrh byrh
πάτρων[α τε]ιμῆς καὶ εὐχα-	tšry dy šnt 563.
ριστίας χάριν, ἔτους γξφ'	

Translation: (Greek) Septimius Hairanes, son of Odainathos, most illustrious senator, exa[rch of the Palmy]renes, Aureli[us Flavianos], son of Aurelius Heliodoros, [son of Raaios], soldier of the III Legio Cyrenaica, (honors) his patron, in his honor and in thanks, the year 563.

(Palmyrenean) This is the image of Septimius Hairan, son of Odainath, illustrious senator and leader of Tadmor, which Aurelius Flavianos(?), son of Maria Flavianos(?) Ra'ai, soldier in the legion at Bosra raised for him, in his honor. In the month Tišri, the year 563.

2. *Odainath's Career, Later 250s (Odainath and Herodian Hairan)*

Odainath

2a. *IGLS* 17.1.55: 257–258, wall console from near the tetrapylon in a later wall

[Σεπτίμ]ον Ὀδαιναθον	[Septimi]us Odainathos,
[τὸν] λαμπρότατον	most illustrious <i>consularis</i> ,
[ὑπ]ατικόν·	the association of the
[τὸ] συμπόσιον	<i>ouannoï</i>
[τῶν] ου(α)ννων τὸν	(honors) its patron,
[π]άτρωνα	the year 569.
ἔτους θξφ'	

2b. *IGLS* 17.1.56: April 258 CE, on column, central segment of the Great Colonnade. Translated on pp. 127–28

Σεπ[τίμιον Ὀδαιναθον]	šlm spṭmyws 'dynt
τὸν λαμ[πρότατον ὑπατικ]όν	nhyr' hpṭyq' mrn dy
συντεχ[νία τῶν χρυσοχ]όν	'qym lh tgm' dy qyny'
καὶ ἀργυ[ροκόπων τ]ὸν δεσπότην	'bd' dhh' wksp' lyqrh
τειμῆς χάριν [ἔ]τους θξφ'	byrh nysn dy šnt 569.
μηνεῖ <u>Ξανδικῶ</u>	

2c. *IGLS* 17.1.143: 257–258, column console from the temple precinct of Baal-Shamin

Σεπτίμιον Ὀδαιναθον	Septimius Odainathos,
τὸν λαμπρότατον ὑπατικόν	most illustrious <i>consularis</i>
τὸ συμπόσιον τῶν κονετ[--]	the association of <i>konet</i> [--],
τὸν πάτρωνα	(honors) its patron, the year 569.
ἔτους θξφ'	

2d. Yon (2013) no. 61=Gorea (2007): March 12, 258 CE, unknown provenance, probably from countryside. Translation at p. 127

‘bd nbwz’ br | kptwt tly’ dy | ‘dynt hptyq’ | nhyr’ bhywh | wdbnwh
bn’ | l’bgl ‘lh’ | t̥b’ ‘bd lh | bt mwtb’ w̥ll | ‘lwh šnt | 569 | byrh’ dr
| ywm 12 šn’ | t̥b ywm b̥t̥b

2e. Yon (2013) no. 157: January 5, 258 CE, provenance unknown. Translation at p. 127

‘bgl | [l]h’ | [t̥]b’ | nbwz | [b]r | kptwt tly’ | [d]y ‘dynt | hptyq’ |
byrh | 5 t̥bt š[nt ?] 569

2f. Rey-Coquais (2006) no. 32: late 250s, Tyre

Σεπτίμ(ιον) Ὀδαιναθον	Septim(ius) Odainathos,
τὸν λαμπρότατ(ον)	most illustrious,
Σεπτίμια	Septimia
κολ(ωνία) Τύρος	colonia Tyre,
ἡ μητρόπολις	metropolis, (honors)

Herodian Hairan

2g. *IGLS* 17.1.59: 257–258 CE, column console, central segment of the Great Colonnade

[Σεπτίμιον] Αἰρανην τὸν	[Septimios] Hairanes,
λαμπρότατον υἱὸν Ὀδαι-	most illustrious, son of Odainathos,
ναθου τοῦ λαμπρο-	most illustrious <i>consularis</i> ,
τάτου ὑπατικοῦ τὸ	the association of
συμπόσιον σκυτ(έ)-	leather cutters and
ων καὶ ἀσκοναυτο-	makers of hide rafts (honors)
ποιῶν τὸν πάτρωνα,	its patron
ἔτους θξφ’	the year 569

2h. *IGLS* 17.1.60: late 250s, column console, central segment of Great Colonnade

Σεπτίμιον Αιρανην	Septimios Hairanes
τὸν λαμπρότατον (υἱὸν)	most illustrious, (son) of
Ὀδαιναθοῦ τοῦ λαμ-	Odainathos, most illustrious
προτάτου ὑπατικοῦ	<i>consularis</i> ,
Ὀυρῳδῆς <u>βουλευ-</u>	Vorodes, councilor . . .
[τής---]	

3. *Odainath's Later Career and Posthumous Honors* (*Odainath and Herodian Hairan*)

3a. *PAT* 1684=Schlumberger (1951) no. 21. Fragments of stone crater from Palmyra's northwest hinterland

(A, fig. C)	
[. . .] 'dynt mlk' (space) 'gn' (or: 'gnt')	. . . Odainath, king . . .
(B) blb[.]y br zby? s? [. . .]	. . . son of Zabbai . . .
(C, fig A) b[. . . l']bgl 'lh' ṭb' šnt	. . . to Abgal, good god,
5.100+[.] +3 byr[h . . .]	the year 5??, month . . .

3b. *IGLS* 17.1.61: 260–261, 263–264, or 267–268, on monumental arch at the segment of the central and eastern segments of the Great Colonnade. The name of Herodian was legible to earlier epigraphers.

[Β]ασιλεῖ βασιλέων προο[ίμι]ον τῇ[ς αὐτοῦ βα]σιλείας τὴν κατὰ
 [Π]ε[ρ]σῶν νείκην ἀναδησαμένῳ Σεπ[τιμίῳ Ἡρωδι]ανῷ
 Ἰούλιος Αὐρήλιος
 [Σεπτί]μιος Ο[ὕ]ο[ρ]ωδῆς [ἐπίτροπος δουκηνάριος καὶ Ἰούλιος
 Αὐρήλι]ος
 Ἐ[ρ]μῆς κεντηνάριος ἀμφοτέροι στρα[τηγοὶ τῆς λαμ]προτάτης
 [κ]ολων[ν]εῖ[ας, τοῦ . οφ' ἔτους].

To the king of kings, Septimius Herodian, who began his reign by being crowned for his victory against the Persians, Iulius Aurelius Septimius Vorodes, [*epitropos ducenarius* and Iulius Aureli]us Hermes, *centenarius*, both *strategoi* of the most illustrious *colonia*, the year 57(?).

3c. *PAT* 0292=*Inv.* 3.19: August 271, on column, central segment of the Great colonnade. Translated at p. 128

šlm spṭmyws ʿdy[nt] mlk mlkʿ
 wmtqnnʿ dy mđnhʿ klh spṭmyʿ
 zbdʿ rb ḥylʿ rbʿ wzby rb ḥylʿ
 dy tdmwr qrtṣṭʿ ʿqym lmrhwn
 byrh ʿb dy šnt 5.100+80+2

3d. Seyrig 1937: tessera, unprovenanced (Antioch?)

Ἡρωδιάνος ὁ βασιλεύς Herodian, king

4. *Reign of Zenobia and Wahballath*

Zenobia

4a. *IGLS* 17.1.57: August 271, on column, central segment of the Great Colonnade. Translated at p. 179

Σεπτίμιαν Ζηνοβίαν τὴν λαμ-	
προτάτην εὐσεβῇ βασιλίσσαν	šlmt spṭmyʿ btzby nhyrtʿ wzdqtʿ
Σεπτίμιοι Ζαβδας ὁ μέγας στρα-	mlktʿ spṭmywʿ zbdʿ rb ḥylʿ
τηλάτης καὶ Ζαββαιοις ὁ ἐνθάδε	rbʿ wzby rb ḥylʿ dy tdmwr qrtṣṭwʿ
στρατηλάτης, οἱ κράτιστοι τὴν	ʿqym lmrthwn byrh ʿb dy šnt 582.
δέσποιναν, ἔτους βπφʿ μηνεὶ Λύφω.	

4b. Equini Schneider (1993) 98, Fig. 18: tessera, unprovenanced (Antioch?)

[Ζη]νοβία ἡ βασιλίσσα Zenobia, queen

Wahballath and Zenobia

4c. *PAT* 0317=*CIS* 2.3, no. 3791, on milestone, el-Karasi of the Palmyrene. Translated at pp. 7–8. Also see *OGIS* 650 (=IGR 3.1029), 651; *CIL* 3.6727.

Latin, from Diocletian's reign

[.]

[. κ] α[ἰ ὑπὲρ σω-]

τηρίας Σεπτιμίας Ζηνο-

βίας τῆς λαμπροτάτης
βασιλίσσης μητρὸς τοῦ
βασιλέως [. . .] υ[. . .]

ʾl h[ywh] wz[kwth dy] sp̄tymyws
whblt ʾtndr[ws nh̄y]rʾ mlk mlkʾ
wʾpnr̄ttʾ dy mdnhʾ klh br
sp̄t[ymy]ws [ʾdynt mlk] mlkʾ wʾl
h̄yh dy sp̄tymyʾ btzby nh̄yrtʾ
mlktʾ ʾmh dy mlk mlkʾ
bt ʾn̄tywkws m<y|> 10+4

4d. *IGR* 3.1065=*CIG* 4503b=*OGIS* 647, near Byblos. Text from Hartmann (2001) 469. Translated at p. 191

[. . . (?) μεγίστ(?)] φ, [ύ] π[άτω]
ἀνθυπάτ[ω...]
ἀνεικίτῳ Σεβαστῷ
καὶ Σεπτίμιῳ Ζενοβίῳ
Σεβαστῇ, μητρὶ τοῦ [(?) δεσπό]
του ἀηττήτου [ἡμῶν Αὐτο]
κράτορος Οὐαβαλλά[θου]
Ἀθηνοδώρου

Wahballath

4e. Bauzou (1998) no. 95, with material from 96–97 (lacunae not marked here). Discussed at pp. 176–77

L(ucius) Iulius Aurelius
Septimius
Vaballathus
Athenodorus
v(ir) c(larrissimus) rex co(n)s(ularis)
imperator dux
Romanorum
(milia passuum) XV
(μείλια) ιεʾ

4f. *ILS* 8924=Bauzou (1998) no. 98: milestone between Bosra and Amman (see also Bauzou (1998) no. 99–101). Translated at p. 191.

Im(peratori) Caesari L(ucio) Iulio
Aurelio Septimio
Vaballatho
Athenodoro Per-
sico maximo Ara-
bico maximo Adia-
benico maximo pio
felici invicto Au(gusto)

5. *Unknown Date or Uncertain Readings*

5a. *IGLS* 17.1.62: to the left of *IGLS* 17.1.61

[Βασιλεῖ βασιλέων- -]ΟΥC[. .]
[καὶ ἐπανορθωτῇ πάσῃ]ς Ἀνατολ[ῆς]
[Σεπτιμίῳ Ὀδαιναθῷ κτλ.]
[- - -]
[- - -]
[- - -]C[- - -]

5b. *RTP* 736: tessera, Palmyra

obverse:
below priests: ḥyrn
left of priests: ḏynt

reverse:
below priests: whblt
left of priests: ḏynt

5c. *IGLS* 17.1.120: column fragment found in “Camp of Diocletian”

[Ἡ βουλὴ καὶ ὁ δῆμος τὸν δ.- - -]
[- - -τ]ῆς πόλεω[ς - - -τοῦ]
[Σεπτιμίου Ὀδαινα]θου βασιλέως βασιλέων

[ἀναθέντα - - -]ΟΝ πάρινον Ἡλίου πατρώου
 [θεοῦ - - -να]ὸν τῶν Σεβαστῶν καὶ καθιερώ-
 [σαντα - - -]νου καὶ Αὐτοκράτορος
 [- - -τειμ]ῆς καὶ μεγαλοφροσύνης ἔνεκεν.

[The civic council and people (honor) the . . .]
 . . . of the city . . .
 [of Septimius Odainath], king of kings
 [because he dedicated] . . . marble of Helios, ancestral
 [god] . . . temple of the Augusti and consecrated
 . . . and of the emperor . . .
 [for his honor] and generosity

5d. Milik (1971) 318; Equini Schneider (1993) 26–27: a damaged tessera in Paris (Cabinet de Medailles)

[. . .]tzby [bt] 'tyks [Ba]thzabbai, [daughter of] Antiochus

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